

2011

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The University of San Francisco

Beyond *Nepantlá*: AN EXPLORATION OF FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE ACADEMIC
SUCCESS OF CHICANO/LATINO STUDENTS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A Dissertation Proposal Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor in Education

By
Lilia Zabalza Chavez
San Francisco
2010

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

*Beyond Nepantlá: AN EXPLORATION OF FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE ACADEMIC
SUCCESS OF CHICANO/LATINO STUDENTS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE*

In the state of California, Chicanos/Latinos are the largest minority in the public education system. As this minority population has increased, their graduation rates have remained low. They continue to be severely underserved, underrepresented, and undereducated. Eight Chicano/Latino students participated in this study to explore, through the methodology of Participatory Action Research (PAR) five-phase process, their perceptions of the external and internal factors that support/impede their academic success in community college. They explored these external and internal factors in order to identify and examine what motivated them to continue on their educational paths. The findings of this study revealed that PAR served as the platform that elucidated for them *el choque* [the cultural collision] that they experience amongst the institutions of school, family, and society. Building collective awareness of *el choque* provided these co-researchers the opportunity to connect to their spiritual space of *Nepantlá*. Validation was the driving force and foundation that then ignited the motivation they gained through their collective experience in PAR. The study demonstrated that when Chicano/Latino students are given the opportunity to collectively reflect, they can deconstruct racism through ancestral practices for

an equitable education. This allows them to transform themselves and become active social and spiritual activists with the capacity to respond to the inequities in education and pursue the higher calling of divine social justice in the public education system.

Lilia Zabalza Chavez, Author

Stephen Cary, Ed.D.
Chairperson, Dissertation Committee

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation committee and approved by the members of the Committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies represented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Lilia Zabalza Chavez
Candidate

May 25, 2011

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Dr. Stephen Cary
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May 25, 2011

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May 26, 2011

Dr. Emma H. Fuentes

May 25, 2011

Dedication

I dedicate the spiritual work of my dissertation to the creator, my ancestors, my grandparents (Leocadio Zabalza and Luisa Brambila, Paternal – and Rafael Chavez and Irinea Rodriguez, Maternal) who are all resting in peace and my parents Lucas B. Zabalza and M. Carmen Chavez (R.I.P), who paved the way and saw me through this experience. I hope to have brought healing and honor to my lineage. In the physical world, this is dedicated to my students, children, grandchildren, godchildren, family and community.

To my students/scholars from Chabot College – Zapata, Marcos, Che, Frida, Cuatlicue, Tonantzin, Itzel and Esperanza – who had the courage to deconstruct and confront racism by honoring themselves through this process of awakening, and without whom I could not have completed this process: thank you. To the multitude of students that I have taught and counseled: I hope that you seek your truth.

To my children: I thank you for being my teachers of love, humility and patience for walking this path with me, and for continuing my love for learning and healing.

Shenny Diaz (Partner – Elizabeth Vega)

Chante Diaz (Partner – Kenneth Vanterpool)

Jaime Rodriguez (Wife – Michelle Villalobos-Rodriguez)

Yessielle Rodriguez (Fiancé – Sergio Palacios)

Jennifer Rodriguez (Husband – Carlos Bonilla)

To my grandchildren Carlos, Janelle and Gianna Bonilla, Sergio Palacios Jr. Milliana, Giovanni and Briella Rodriguez, and to all my godchildren in the United States and in Guanajuato, Mexico: I am honored to be a part of your lives as you blossom into the leaders of tomorrow and create your own change in your families and communities.

To my brothers and sisters: despite the many traumatic circumstances that we never expected to make it through, I can say that we all have grown to become compassionate human beings.

To my nephews, nieces, and grandnephews and nieces: I took this journey to make a difference in our family and to break the cycle. Follow your dreams – let nothing stand in the way of your transformation. Jose Zabalza – Brother – (Nephew – Jose M. Zabalza, Grandniece –Alexia Zabalza), Antonio Chavez – Brother – (Partner – Ivana Callo)

Maria Chavez – Sister – (Nephew –Anthony R. Johnson, Grandnephews Gianni and

Jasiah, Niece – Mariah I. Sapp, Nephew – Charles L. Tatum III, Grandnephew Hassan)

Manuel R. Zabalza – Brother - (Nephew – Manuel Jr. and Niece – Bianca Zabalza)

Annaberta Zabalza – Sister – (R.I.P)

Gilberto Zabalza – Brother – (Partner – Penny)

Luisa Chavez – Sister – (Partner – Ivonne Garcia and Niece – Genesis)

Irene Zabalza – Sister – (Partner – Margaret Jaramillo)

Carmen L. Dominguez – Sister – (Nephews – Francisco Jr. and Abraham Dominguez)

Socorro Marquez – Sister – (whereabouts unknown, last seen at the age of 2 in 1976)

Estella McEwen – Sister – (Niece Sierra), Leticia Zabalza – Sister – David Zabalza – Brother

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my committee, Dr. Stephen Cary, Dr. Shabnam Koirola-Azad and Dr. Emma Fuentes, for their commitment to my process and for their support and guidance as I confronted my *choque*. Their feedback and encouragement throughout this endeavor have supported my shift to my middle space of *Nepantlá*, leading to my transformation.

My further thanks and gratitude go to the following people:

Dr. Dan McPherson, Dean of School of Education who kept me accountable to my learning;

My godmother/mentor, Mary H. Barnett M.D., for taking this journey alongside of me since, I was in community college. I appreciate your gifts of knowledge and thank you for providing me with unconditional support and for teaching me to follow my path without fear;

My spiritual sister/editor Caitlin Fischer, M.A., who taught me that writing is a process that one must love and discover;

All my Comadres from the Mariachi Femenil Orgullo Mexicano – Ninfa Iglesias, Nayely Limón, Ruby Ochoa, Nydia Gonzalez, Lucia Perez, Bianca Carreno, Linda Menekin, Reanna Albert, Mayra Bañuelos, Nadya Naranjo, and Alejandra Contreras – thank you for keeping my soul and spirit alive with the music of our ancestors. And to the Mariachi community I have been a part of all my life – ¡Que siga la Tradición!;

My circle of friends and extended family – Kathleen Salmon and Family, Lona Kelly, M.S. and Family, Lucy Agee & Carl Dudley, Menendez Family, Dr. Ralph Kindred, Alberto Olivares, B.S, Rene Stephens, M.A., May Howell, M.A., Dr. A. Mario Rivas, Dr. Judy Walters, Dr. Velia Garcia, Dr. David Johnson, Dr. JuanCarlos Arauz, Dr. Sophia S. Ramirez, Dr. Marisol Ruiz, Dr. Dulce Maria Perez, Mariana Chuquín, spiritual sister/colleague, and to the native and spiritual communities that I am a part of. Thank you for lifting me up when I needed your prayers and support, and;

Dr. Laura Rendon, who through her work of Validation Theory made my dissertation come alive. I thank her for modeling humility and reaching out and reviewing my work. I am grateful for her insight.

In peace with all my relations.

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Chapter I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Chicanos/Latinos are poised to be the largest minority and the leading population within American society. According to Hayes-Bautista (2004), Chicanos/Latinos will dominate the education system and the workforce by 2017. The Chicano/Latino population growth is especially evident in the states of California (13,074,156) and Texas (8,385,139). Mirroring historic trends of other minority groups, as the number of this ethnic minority continues to grow, a disproportionate number have become economically disadvantaged and under-educated (Retrieved November 22, 2008 from <http://www.census.gov/populations/www/socdemp/Hispanic/hisdef.html>). Given that this has been the case with the Chicano/Latino¹ population in the United States, more are living in poverty. One mechanism to integrate Chicanos/Latinos as productive contributors to society has always been education. Yet given that many obstacles affecting Chicanos/Latinos exist within the education system, this mechanism continues to fail.

Chicanos/Latinos are the largest ethnic group in the public school system in the state of California, constituting 40.5% of the 5.7 million students enrolled (DeCos, Aranda, Hernandez & Rodriguez, 2000; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). The Latino Scorecard Zarate & Pachon (2006) reported that in Los Angeles County, Chicano/Latino students comprise 62% of the student population and 58% of the K-12 student population between the ages 5 to 19 in the public school system. Kever (2009) also reported that 36% of the total population in the state of Texas were Chicanos/Latinos, making them the leading ethnic group numerically, but as in California they have fallen behind in educational attainment.

¹ Throughout, I will use the term Chicano/Latino to include native born, undocumented and immigrant students of Latin American descent.

In California the public education grade-level subsets are typically K-5, 6-8, 9-12, followed by the community college system and then the state university systems – California State University [CSU] and University of California [UC]. One of the original missions of the California community colleges was to provide access to disadvantaged and underrepresented students. Since community colleges are the main route for minority and disadvantaged populations into mainstream public postsecondary four-year institutions, it is essential for community colleges not only to recruit, retain, and graduate Chicano/Latino students, but also to empower them to transfer successfully into the CSU and UC systems of higher education. Relevant to the matter of retention are a host of external and internal factors: external being those issues involving the education institutions, familial and societal pressures, and internal factors being those inherent to the student, for example personal, emotional, or cognitive issues.

Despite the increased growth of Chicano/Latino students in both California and Texas public school systems, retention and graduation rates have not increased. Gándara and Contreras (2009), and Kever (2009) have argued that California and Texas are disproportionately impacted due to the large number of undereducated Chicanos/Latinos. Furthermore, they noted that California and Texas barely passed the national average of graduating high school students. Gándara and Contreras (2009) have concluded that what is happening in education for Chicanos/Latinos is no longer a crisis. The situation for Chicanos/Latinos in education has expanded to another level: what they call “both a regional and national catastrophe” (p. 5).

Fry (2002), Gándara and Contreras (2009), Kever (2009), Valencia (2002), Valenzuela (2000) and Yosso (2006) together illuminate the consistently alarming numbers of Chicano/Latino students who drop out of K-12 schools and are not prepared to succeed in college. The Postsecondary Education Commission (2005) also reported that the increase in

Chicano/Latino and African American high school dropout rates indicated a decreased probability of these populations entering college or accessing other career opportunities. Jaschik (2007) reported that out of 75 first-time Chicano/Latino students who entered the community college system, only seven succeeded in transferring to the CSU or UC systems. The author did not address the issue of successful degree completion.

These demographics are personally relevant to me as the researcher because I am the only one of 14 siblings who has completed a college education. Only seven of my siblings have completed high school; the rest dropped out of either middle school or high school. If any of my siblings choose to resume their education, they will have to do so within the community college system. My own four children have all graduated from high school, one graduated from the CSU system, and one recently graduated from the community college and is attending a CSU. For these reasons this research is particularly important to me.

Statement of the Problem

After over forty years of educational reform, Chicano/Latino students are still severely underrepresented, underserved, and undereducated. Researchers Darder et al. (1997), Darder and Torres (2004), Fry (2002), Gándara (1995), Gándara and Contreras (2009), Kever (2009), Nieto and Bode (2007), and Valenzuela (1999) have all substantiated that Chicano/Latino school failure existed before the 1960s. In addition, Gándara (1995) noted that it was not until the 1960's that studies were done to initiate the collection of specific data related to Chicano/Latino educational failure. Similarly, Lopez, Puddefoot, and Gándara (2000) and Ginorio and Houston, (2001) claimed that the dropout rate among Chicano/Latino students showed a direct correlation to the lack of institutional change. The lack of institutional change continues to adversely affect Chicano/Latino students. Kever (2009) noted that the problem is that there are no consequences

for not recruiting or enrolling Chicanos/Latinos. While Chicano/Latino students still attend community college, only 9% of those students transfer to institutions of higher education to complete their education.

Education is the conduit through which individuals contribute to society and develop voice. Hayes-Bautista (2004) commented that an educated workforce is the key factor for the success of a better economy. He reported that because Chicanos/Latinos comprise more than 50% of all children born in California, they will be more than 50% of the workforce by 2017. Hayes-Bautista's data is important because he identifies the changes that American society is facing, revealing through his study the urgency of bringing the recruitment, retention, graduation, and successful transfer of Chicano/Latino community college students up to the levels of their White counterparts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of Chicano/Latino community college students related to academic success. Using Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, this researcher explored the external and internal factors that supported and/or impeded the academic success of Chicano/Latino students at a community college. Moreover, the research sought to understand what Anzaldúa (1987) identified as *el choque* [collision] of the internal borderlands where Chicanos/Latinos find themselves, which is known as the middle space or *Nepantlá*. Through the five-phase PAR group process, the participants defined external factors such as institutional racism (as it pertains to government and education), community and environmental pressures such as (gangs and peer pressure), cultural expectations (specific to gender roles) and individual behaviors (maladaptive choices, substance use or abuse, or risky behavior). Beyond these external factors, they identified internal factors such as

identity, gender, self-esteem, family expectations, and avoidance of marginalization that affect their successes or failures. The students' experiences within this matrix were the basis of this study. The idea was to guide the Chicano/Latino students through a solution-driven approach to empower them to take action as free thinkers and become rooted from within self to succeed.

Research Questions

In this study, the researcher addressed the following questions.

Research Question 1:

What external factors do Chicano/Latino students perceive as determinants of academic success/failure?

Research Question 2:

What internal factors do Chicano/Latino students perceive as determinants of academic success/failure?

Research Question 3:

What motivates Chicano/Latino students to succeed?

Background and Need for Study

A fundamental shift to educate the underrepresented and disadvantaged non-White populations who now constitute the majority of the individuals in the state of California's education system must occur. Gándara (2002), Gándara and Contreras (2009), Ginorio and Houston (2001) and Schwartz (2001) asserted that to change inequity in education, identifying the problem is not enough. An emphasis must be placed on the development of programs to inspire Chicano/Latino students and provide a positive atmosphere with distinct cultural and academic support to meet their needs. Darder (1997), Darder and Torres (2004) and Stanton-

Salazar (2001) point out the dual imperative of stressing both the recognition of the inequities that exist in society, and the need for leaders to find solutions for the benefit of all students.

This proposed PAR study was essential in identifying the specific needs of Chicano/Latino students. Gándara and Contreras (2009) noted that Chicanos/Latinos are the largest and least educated minority group within the California education system. Therefore, it is important to include language and methodologies best suited to addressing the life experiences of Chicano/Latino students. In addition, for community colleges to succeed, their administrators and faculty must integrate the practices and goals of recruitment, retention and graduation into their service of the Chicano/Latino student population. They must develop environments that nurture these students and encourage them to find their voices within the discourses of education, workforce, community, and family.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory/Latino Critical Race Theory (CRT/LatCrit) served as a means to view the fundamental aspects of the proposed research to provide opportunities for Chicano/Latino students to succeed within the education system. In Critical Race Theory researchers Delgado and Stefancic (2001) noted that race is considered “a way to confront, understand and transform the racism and power within the educational structure” (p. 2). According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), CRT was developed by legal scholars to identify the importance of race in disadvantaged communities. CRT has been used to identify race as the center of the debate concerning inequities in education and has been utilized in educational settings to examine the issues faced by members of disadvantaged communities of color. CRT also serves as a method to measure various aspects of educational attrition, retention, and racial disparity.

CRT was originally developed because of the lack of support for African Americans that persisted despite the promises of the Civil Rights Movement. According to the metric provided by CRT, societal changes were determined through the legal system based on the Black and White binary, a metric defined specifically with reference to difficulties faced uniquely by African Americans within a White majority culture. However, other scholars argued that the African American experience was not sufficient to explain the injustices experienced by all people of color. Ethnic studies scholars challenged the theory and expanded it into a more inclusive discipline to better meet the unique needs of other ethnic groups.

Yosso (2006), Delgado Bernal (2002), Solorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) commented that, much like African Americans, other ethnic groups also endured historical, systemic injustices that must be confronted through a different lens. Yosso added that Latino critical theory (LatCrit) resulted in a broader scope and an opportunity to innovatively discuss the various layers of racism in Chicano/Latino experiences. Therefore, the technique of counter-storytelling utilized in CRT is foundational. Through this technique, participants express and affirm their unique value as members of a minority culture. Through counter-storytelling participants' cultural identities are asserted to counter the entrenched system and resist injustices. These counter-stories further reveal the histories and strength that communities of color possess and the ways in which they continue to persevere.

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), LatCrit challenges the Black and White binary, in order to access a deeper analysis into Latino issues such as "immigration, language rights, bilingual education, internal colonialism, sanctuary for Latin American refugees, and census categories for Hispanics" (p. 81). The authors noted that CRT utilizes race as the main lens to analyze and identify inequities within social and institutional structures. LatCrit

complements CRT and serves to expand insights by detailing how empowerment is possible through the development of counter-storytelling techniques, and how this empowerment in turn leads to the development of voice and change.

Limitations of the Study

My perspective in this study is based on my own experience as a first generation Chicana/Latina who initially lacked the requirements to attend a four-year university after high school. Therefore, I started my journey at the community college system. Because of the proposed research design and my previous work with disadvantaged, nontraditional students, I have what Swisher (1986) calls “the insider approach.” My knowledge of this community served as validation for the observations conducted during the study. While my “insider approach” should prove beneficial to the study, it could also be limiting because I have my own personal biases and experience. Based on the insider approach and method combined, emphasis was placed on the community experience and empowerment.

The research is limited to Chabot community college and is not representative of the entire community college system. Due to the small sample size of students interviewed, this study cannot be regarded as representative of the whole Chicano/Latino population and culture. In addition, the co-researchers in the proposed study have been influenced by their culture, families, communities, and by each other. Although Chicanos/Latinos are categorized under Latinos within the census, there is diversity within this population. Chicanos/Latinos share various similarities, yet each subculture has unique variations. Ballesteros (1986) noted that these distinctions can result in more educational opportunities for Chicano/Latino students, adding that result for Chicano/Latino students’ “should be equal even if inputs are unequal” (p. 53).

Significance of the Study

As previously noted by researchers Darder (1997), Darder and Torres (2004), Gándara (1995), Gándara and Contreras (2009), Hayes-Bautista (2004), and Kever (2009), Chicanos/Latinos are the largest ethnic minority population in the United States and are the least educated group. Shulock, Moore, Offenstien, and Kirlin (2008) concluded in a report prepared for the California state university system by the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy that “the even lower rates of success that Latino students used to have are of great concern given their growing share of the student population and the State’s workforce” (p.7). According to the 1960 California Master Plan (Master Plan Survey Team), community colleges were to help meet the workforce needs of the state. The special analysis done for the Making Opportunity Affordable initiative sponsored by the Lumina Foundation projected that, in California, “the educational attainment must go beyond high school in order to stay competitive in the nation’s economy” (p. 6). The Foundation projected that by 2050 the nation will be “majority minority” and the “dangerous stagnation” of educational attainment and the lack of making the dream of college a reality is a “national tragedy” (p. 6.) (Retrieved February 2009 from [luminafoundation.org/publications/ A_strong_nation_through_higher_education.pdf](http://luminafoundation.org/publications/A_strong_nation_through_higher_education.pdf)).

In this critical time of a collapsing economy, many Chicanos/Latinos are returning to community college to improve their skills and gain social mobility. Gage and Newman (2008) and Shulock et al. (2008) clearly showed the important role the community college system must play in any effort to increase the number of college graduates. My proposed study is also important because currently “no data are available at the California Community College system level to identify students who need remediation of basic skills, so outcomes for such students

cannot be monitored” (p. 10). The intent of the study is to specifically determine the needs of Chicano/Latino students by gathering this information from the students themselves, thus making them party to their own empowerment. In this way, the students will develop their voices and identify the determinants of their success. Furthermore, they build community relationships and awareness by exercising their voices as community questioners and creators to find tangible solutions for future generations of Chicano/Latino students.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used frequently throughout this study.

- **Chicano:** An individual of Mexican ancestry born within the United States. However, the term is based in the historical and political context of the struggle for Civil rights, therefore carrying with it a political connotation.
- **Latino:** A person native to Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Central America, South America, the Dominican Republic or the Caribbean, or who has ancestry with one or more of those locations. This term locates origin within Latin American.
- **Hispanic:** The designation in the U.S. Census for individuals who identify themselves as having ancestry or origins in Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Central America, or South America. The term means of Spanish descent—locating origin in Spain.
- **AB 540:** Assembly Bill 540 was signed into law in October 2001. It allowed eligible immigrant students to pay in-state tuition at public colleges and universities. This term is used in the community college system to identify and track undocumented students in California.
- **Undocumented:** The term used to describe a person who is a non-citizen living in the U.S. without legal immigration status.

- **Acculturation:** A process in which two autonomous cultural groups exchange features and where one of the cultural groups adopts the beliefs and behaviors of the other group (Berry and Padilla 1980).
- **Assimilation:** When an individual or ethnic group becomes similar to their environment.
- **Education system:** The entire K-16 academic grade structure.
- **Dropout:** Any student who leaves school or is excluded by the school administration (Greene, 1966).
- **Non-traditional students:** College students who are commuters, do not live on campus, have minimal interaction on campus, are older in age, and are usually employed (Bean and Metzner, 1985).
- ***El Choque*:** An internal cultural collision whereby the individual undergoes an internal conflict due to the value systems they live within and collide (Anzaldúa, 1987). The cultural collision is created by the overlapping external factors that connect the silenced internal borderlands between, school, home and society.
- ***Nepantlá*:** In Nahuatl (Aztec Language) the term means being in between or in the middle space of conflict, where the individual can discover their internal power. Anzaldúa (1987) called it the middle space where the individual decides what cultural aspects of their experience they will keep or change.
- **Mestizo:** The term is used to describe a person of mixed race. Mestizo is used in Mexico, Central and South America to identify people who have a mix of European (Spanish or Portuguese) and indigenous descent.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the researcher will review the studies that investigate how inequities affect the academic success of Chicano/Latino students and contribute to higher dropout rates, lack of economic mobility, and higher rates of unemployment. This study will also consider external and internal factors in Chicano/Latino students' lives that have not been traditionally examined as inequities, but in fact may function as major impediments to their academic success. Collectively the researcher and co-researchers explored the external and internal factors highlighted in the literature that support and/or impede the academic success of Chicano/Latino students. As the researcher, my theoretical framework connected the following theories: Critical Race Theory (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001) and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), both of which hold race as a central conceptual tool in any attempt to "confront, understand and transform the racism and power in the educational structure" (p. 2). The following three theories bring a complete understanding on how to apply CRT/LatCrit. Deficit Thinking Theory is connected to a mindset that still exists and is utilized in the education system to exclude the knowledge base Chicano/Latino students bring to educational settings and experiences. The Acculturation Theory is connected to the expectations that American society places on Chicanos/Latinos. This theory also illustrates the process of adapting which is complex and holds many internal facets for the individual before change can occur. These two theories explain the students' relationship to the external factors presented in this study, a relationship which makes these external factors impediments to the students' academic success. Finally, Validation Theory was included to provide an option that brings insight specific to the

Chicano/Latino student population, and makes possible positive reinforcement as an intervention.

In addition, throughout I referenced other theories including Deficit Theory (Valencia, 1997), which places the blame for school failure on the student and the family. In discussing this theory, Valencia has further noted that because of the deficit thinking of society and the dominant culture there is “little incentive to learn from a ‘deficient’ or ‘deprived’ culture” (p. 137). Those who adhere to deficit thinking believe that the poor are in poverty because of their own deficiencies. This mindset is still affecting the institutional structures that should ideally be in place to help students succeed. Schooling is seen as a form of acculturation and integration into American society. Padilla (1980) noted that acculturation is a process. Acculturation Theory points to various aspects of adjustment to the dominant culture and the complex process of change the individual undergoes, while Validation Theory (Rendon, 1994) treats the combined experience of integration and positive interactions as the significant factors that motivate Chicano/Latino students to persevere in different environments. These three theories will be used to examine the complexity of the multiple demands Chicano/Latino students are subject to.

Restatement of the Problem

The inequities and the lack of accountability for services within the education system have perpetuated the crisis facing Chicanos/Latinos who strive to be viable, productive citizens of this society. This crisis in education is affected by various factors that are greater than the school: legal, social, political and economic (Darder, 1997; Darder and Torres, 2004; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Gándara, 1995; Gándara and Contreras, 2009; Greene, 1966; Kever, 2009; Nieto, 1999; 2007; Romo and Falbo, 1996; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valencia, 2002: 2005; Valenzuela, 1999; 2000 and Yosso, 2006).

One of the major concerns in education in California is the increased number of dropouts and lower rates of graduation for Chicanos/Latinos. These numbers are such a concern because Chicanos/Latinos have not merely slipped through the cracks, they have been actively denied access to an education. According to Gándara and Contreras (2009), half of all Chicanos/Latinos fail to graduate mainly due to language barriers and schools that lack sufficient resources. The authors added that dropouts have become a critical problem in the national economy. Similarly, Kever (2009) added that in Texas Chicanos/Latinos are affected by multiple factors such as language barriers, immigration issues, poverty, border schools, lack of financial support and lack of role models. Nazario (2007) concluded that “high school dropouts have the most to lose” (p. 258), and that the states that house them will be most adversely impacted by their utilization of public services. Gándara and Contreras (2009) and Kever (2009) added that neglecting to prepare underrepresented students will lead to a decrease in per capita income that will seriously impact the economy. In the past, Greene (1966) asserted that the minimum requirement for entry into the labor force was a high school diploma. Today individuals need to have degrees in higher education in order to compete in the work force. Greene added that those lacking an education are severely handicapped in society and have difficulty finding employment. Gándara and Contreras (2009) illuminated that the lack of educational attainment and increased dropout rates among Latinos exacerbate the presence of a “permanent underclass” (p. 13). Kozol (1991; 2005) stated that, those who refuse to educate the children from impoverished communities “will be their victims later on” (p. 89). Those who find themselves to be denied an education realize that without it, the possibilities for a successful career in the future are limited. The above realities facing Chicano/Latino students are clearly unjust and create a vastly inequitable education system.

Many who return to college as first generation, low-income, re-entry, and non-traditional students are not initially prepared nor are they eligible to enter a four-year university. As a result, many Chicanos/Latinos will enroll in community colleges with the hope of transferring to four-year universities. In this study, the researcher explored the external and internal factors that supported or impeded the academic success of Chicano/Latino students.

This study is divided into three categories: external factors, internal factors, and motivation. The first category, external factors, examines the obstacles that deter Chicanos/Latinos from education. A brief history of the education of Chicanos/Latinos is included with a historical link of how they have confronted the Black and White binary. In addition, the historical educational experiences of Chicanos/Latinos were included to illuminate the lack of their academic achievement as established by previous researchers. The academic achievement is focused on the various levels within the education system, beginning at K-12, continuing into the community college and four-year universities. Since the study was done in the State of California, an emphasis was placed on the California Master Plan which provides some insight into the role of the community college. Moreover, within the community college, counseling was specifically examined because of the important role it has in the recruitment, retention, graduation and success of Chicano/Latino students' advancement in the whole education system.

The second category, internal factors, focuses on the complexity of Chicano/Latino cultural adaptation in America. This adaptation extends beyond the classroom, encompassing home and social dynamics. This pervasive process of adaptation produces internal conflict, touching the core of Chicanos/Latinos where they face internalized oppression, issues of self esteem and more in-depth internal struggles.

The third category, internal motivation, delves into the political, psychological and spiritual conflict Chicanos/Latinos find themselves in. The internal motivation is dormant until the Chicano/Latino realizes the internal conflict they are in because of the clash between the belief and value systems they live within. The conflict that Anzaldúa, (1987) identified as *el choque* [cultural collision] is where one can find the third space of *Nepantlá*. By finding *Nepantlá* Chicanos/Latinos are able to make conscious choices to reclaim who they are, which also motivates them to find their own solutions while making positive change.

External Factors that Affect Chicanos/Latinos

In this section, the researcher explored the external factors affecting the academic success of Chicanos/Latinos, including 1) the effects of the differences among ideologies at school, home and in society and how this affects the individual. Other factors that continue to affect Chicano/Latino students include 2) the ramifications of history, 3) the Black and White binary, 4) lack of academic achievement, 5) lack of access to the community college and counseling. These factors historically have resulted in a subordinate, invisible status in society for Chicanos/Latinos. The researcher also examined the role of counseling as a retention method to validate and guide Chicano/Latino students through the education system.

Overview: obstacles that deter Chicanos/Latinos from education. Yosso (2006) argued that Chicano/Latino students face many obstacles to their success within the education system. Yosso identified these obstacles in both the primary and secondary levels as follows:

Chicanas/os usually attend underfinanced, racially segregated, over-crowded elementary schools that lack basic human and material resources. The least experienced teachers tend to be placed in the most low-income, over-crowded schools. Indeed, schools comprised predominately of low-income students of color evidence a higher proportion of uncertified and less experienced teachers, more unfilled teacher vacancies, and a high teacher turnover rate. (p. 21).

These factors have continually affected Chicano/Latino students throughout the education system. Research has shown that because of these obstacles Chicano/Latino students fall behind their white counterparts. Racial minorities in the United States have been disproportionately impacted by the structures of society, including school, work, and life opportunities. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001):

Studies show that blacks and Latinos who seek loans, apartments, or jobs are much more apt than similarly qualified whites to be rejected, often for vague or spurious reasons. The prison population is largely black and brown; chief executive officers, surgeons and university presidents are almost all white. Poverty, however, has a black or brown face: black families have, on the average, about one tenth of the assets of their white counterparts. They pay more for many products and services, including cars. People of color lead shorter lives, receive worse medical care, complete fewer years of school, and occupy more menial jobs than do whites. (p. 10)

The continued marginalization of Chicanos/Latinos has resulted in the perpetuation of the oppression and poverty of this population. Furthermore, as Chicano/Latino parents struggle to survive economically, more adolescents are pressured to drop out of school to help their families.

Olivas (1997), Shaw and Goldrick-Rab (2006), and Yosso (2006), concurred that these inequities result in the overrepresentation of Chicano/Latino students entering the community college system and their under-representation in the student population entering four-year universities. Although Chicano/Latino students matriculate in high numbers, few continue on the path to higher education. Those who do transfer, according to Olivas (1986), end up in “institutions established for part-time commuter students” (p. 2), thereby perpetuating many of the challenges their community has consistently faced. Shaw and Goldrick-Rab (2006) agreed that the lack of retention and transfer of Chicano/Latino students to the CSU or UC has resulted in the continued marginalization of this population.

The problem was aptly stated by Delgado and Stefancic (2001), through their assertion that in the current paradigm the crisis in education has been ignored. This denial has only exacerbated this crisis' affliction of the undereducated. This dismal situation has become more critical as more Chicano/Latino students drop out of middle school and high school and opt to attend community college as a pathway to higher education. Gándara and Contreras (2009) added that as Chicanos/Latinos are the largest minority population regardless of legal status, "education has a Latino face" (p.1). The authors concurred that the American education system is no longer in crisis; it is shifting to "both a regional and national catastrophe" (p. 5) if nothing is done.

A brief history of the education of Chicanos/Latinos. Historically, the educational experience of Chicanos/Latinos has mirrored the educational experience of other ethnic groups, such as Native Americans and African Americans. Spring (2004) claimed that Mexicans were placed in programs similar to the Native Americans and those that did attend public schools were segregated. Within some areas of California, migrant children were completely denied access to an education. Although organizations such as LULAC fought back, by the 1930's "Mexican children were the most segregated in the state" (p. 89). Spring (2004) argued that laws such as California's Propositions 209 and 227 were created to exclude and segregate people of color, and have resulted in the perpetuation of their subordination in education. Proposition 187 created further marginalization by denying undocumented immigrants access to health care and social services.

As a result of these discriminatory laws, as Pizarro (2005) noted, Chicanos/Latinos have been targeted based on their appearance. Multiple cases have been documented in the 1990's whereby "many whites utilized the passage of legislation as validation of their right to limit the

freedom of brown-skinned individuals” (p. 5). Chicano/Latino U.S. citizens were denied access to schools, transportation and their bank accounts (Pizarro, 2005). This type of thinking has come from a societal mindset that people of color are inferior to Whites, thus resulting in the maintenance of Whites’ privileged positions within and through societal structure. In the case of Chicanos/Latinos, Pizarro (2005) points out that the racially politicized climate in schools pushes students to “withdraw physically or psychologically,” thereby limiting their opportunities (p. 224). Pizarro concluded that race needs to be seen as a factor that “shapes the experience of Chicano/Latino [students] in and out of school” (p. 5).

Chesler, Crowfoot and Lewis (2005) noted that within the education system not much has changed. They argued that race and racism are deeply embedded in major institutions. The reality is that racism is a part of American history that is enacted on a daily basis and limits the life opportunities for members of oppressed groups. The authors also concurred that racial membership is critical in structures because it is a part of an individual’s identity in society that warrants certain societal privileges. According to Valencia (1997), Deficit Thinking Theory points to those in power who blame school failure on the less fortunate. He added that failure is connected to labels and stereotypes created by those in positions of power. Furthermore, those in poverty suffer because of their own “internal deficits or deficiencies” (p. 2). For example, Spring (2004) and Pizarro (2005) affirmed this historically, stating that because Mexicans were believed to be “racially inferior,” the United States government felt justified in its’ invasion and conquest of Mexico. In 1848, those individuals living on the land ceded to the United States by Mexico were granted citizenship under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Despite this, a great number of Mexicans were driven out.

Spring (2004) stated that Mexicans were seen as a threat to the government, which “instituted deculturalization programs” much like those instituted for Native Americans (p. 74). Gándara and Contreras (2009) revealed that Chicanos/Latinos have continuously dealt with inequities in educational policies. For example, Chicanos/Latinos have always been more segregated from mainstream students. These problems continue today in the State of California primarily due to the legal bans of Bilingual Education (Proposition 227) and Affirmative Action (Proposition 209). Educational scholars Gándara and Contreras (2009), Valencia (2002; 2005), Valenzuela (1999; 2000) and Yosso (2006), have argued that forced elimination of language for Chicanos/Latinos sets them up to perform poorly in school and dropout. In *Subtractive Schooling*, Valenzuela (1999) added that the subtraction of cultural resources, such as language, erodes Chicanos/Latinos’ social capital. Unlike acculturation, through assimilation programs, policies were implemented to dissociate Chicanos/Latinos from their language and cultural traditions. However, Spring (2004) and Valenzuela (1999) noted that the resistance of Chicanos/Latinos to the elimination of their language and traditions resulted in the limited success of these deculturalization programs.

When it came to educating Chicanos/Latinos, Whites were conflicted about educating Mexican children because their attendance in school excluded them from working in the fields. This position was challenged in 1931 with the Roberto Alvarez v. the Lemon Grove School Board case concerning the denial of children of Mexican descent from school entry. Espinosa (1986) narrated how Mexican children were labeled as ignorant health hazards from deficient homes. Despite the obvious nature of this discrimination, the judge dismissed the case since the census officially categorized Mexicans as Caucasians. However, resistance continued. In 1945, Chicano/Latino parents again challenged racial segregation in Mendez v. Westminster and the

California Board of Education. Officials were not interested in educating Mexicans. Instead, as a form of control, they wanted to “Americanize” them while denying them economic and political advancement. Thus, Mexican children who did attend school were segregated and mistreated (Spring, 2004). Segregation and mistreatment have continued into the present primarily due to the legal bans on bilingual education and affirmative action.

Spring (2004) and Valenzuela (1999) argued that institutional structures play a major role in the deculturalization and stripping away of voice, identity, self-esteem and the image of Chicano/Latino students. Structural barriers have great impact on the academic preparation and success of Chicano/Latino students. Yosso (2006) explained that the pre-requisite to increased educational attainment at the college level is a high-quality elementary education. Greene (1966) declared that all dropouts are reachable because “school is the only agency that has access to all children in society” (p. 32). In the case of Chicanos/Latinos, dropouts are clearly not reached early enough. Services and programs of high quality are always placed in higher income schools, reducing the possibility of access for Chicano/Latino students. Valencia (1997) claimed that Chicano/Latino students are viewed as incapable, based on the cultural deficit model that unfairly labels specific groups of students as “at risk” or “disadvantaged” (p. 2). Madrid (1986) eloquently elaborated on how Chicanos/Latinos are re-victimized and oppressed within the institutions they are exposed to, noting:

Specifically our exclusion from institutional life of American society and from the forums it provides has kept us from being heard, even when our voices have been loud and our concerns compelling. Denied access to power, especially the power to define, we have had to suffer in silence the denial, distortion and trivialization of our historical experience. Most damagingly, we were seduced into believing that the fault lay in ourselves and not in the constellation of institutions that govern our lives. (p. ix)

The discrimination that Chicanos/Latinos have historically faced continues in today’s struggle for educational equality. Valenzuela’s (1999) study in Texas and Yosso’s (2006) study

in Los Angeles, California revealed the increasingly deficient structural patterns experienced across different states. Valenzuela looked at the negative impact of the move towards increased assessment and standardized tests on Chicanos/Latinos, who are subsequently labeled as failures or as being deficient. However, both Valenzuela's and Yosso's studies showed that Chicano/Latino students have continued to test lower at the elementary and secondary education levels. Yosso also indicated that Chicanos/Latinos are excluded from enrolling in magnet programs designed to help students advance within the education system, thereby increasing the probability of more students dropping out of school.

In 2005, researchers with the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University challenged the estimated graduation rates in California, reporting that the data were flawed. The report showed that officials had underestimated the number of dropouts.

Gándara and Contreras (2009) noted that the "improvements over time may, in fact, be illusionary" (p.23). Kever (2009) added that progress has been slow and that the rapid Chicano/Latino population growth has cancelled out the gains. Although children of high school age are required to attend school regardless of the quality of education, researchers with the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006) reported that the State of California had the highest dropout rate in the nation. Out of 50 U.S. states and protectorates, California ranked 50th with 141,000 high school dropouts. The data indicated the alarming number of students dropping out of high school and suggested that students become disengaged early in high school (Retrieved August 27, 2008 <http://www.kidscount.org>).

On the other hand, Contreras (2004) and Gándara and Contreras (2009) revealed that data is misleading concerning the Chicano/Latino population because it is gathered at the high school level, yet more Latinos are dropping out in middle school. Those who do graduate from high

school often continue their education at the community college level, only to later drop out of the system entirely. Chapa and Schink (2006) stated that one contributing factor for the increase in dropout rates is the segregation of Chicano/Latino students resulting from their placement in low-performing schools. The authors explained the long-term effects – that high drop-out rates lead to increased levels of both incarceration and unemployment, which are extremely costly for the state to manage. In *USA Today* Marklein (July 2008) reported that “higher education traditionally has favored the best and brightest,” yet those most at risk of failing need to be provided with more help to balance the disparity in education and in the economy (Retrieved on July 26, 2008 <http://usatoday.printthis.clickability.com>). The current education system continues the model of survival of the fittest, where only the strong survive. Gándara and Contreras (2009) concluded that “Education is the single most effective way to integrate [Chicanos]/Latinos into the economy and society” (p. 13).

While dropouts who never re-enter educational settings become major drains on the economy by falling prey to incarceration and unemployment, those who re-enter community college and graduate can become major contributors to the economy. Researchers Gándara and Contreras (2009), Greene (1966), Kever (2009), Pizzaro (2005), Spring (2004), Valenzuela (1999; 2000), Valencia (2002; 2005) and Yosso (2006) revealed that the covert racial underpinnings imbedded within the institutional structures affect Chicanos/Latinos. They concurred that historically the education system has had a major role in the lack of success of this population. They agreed that the solution to reducing the dropout rates is to educate this population. Finally, as Chicanos/Latinos continue to fail in education they are re-emerging in the prison system and among the poorest populations in the United States. They can no longer be ignored.

Chicanos/Latinos: beyond Black & White. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that a violation of the 14th amendment of the United States Constitution had been committed. As a result of this decision, a fundamental shift occurred that warranted African-Americans to re-integrate from the national practice of discriminatory racial segregation, which actively perpetuated lack of resources and the use of decrepit buildings in schools meant for African American students—factors determined to affect African American students’ ability to succeed. This historical attitude shift was preceded by other court cases, such as *Alvarez* 1931 and *Mendez* 1945, which foreshadowed the *Brown* ruling to provide equal rights to students and prohibit further racial segregation in the state of California. However, regardless of this legal progress, and in part because these moves to de-segregate were focused on African American students and the Black and White binary, Chicanos/Latinos have continued to face these same issues of educational inequity.

Researchers (Chapa and De la Rosa, 2004; Contreras, 2004) claimed that during the 1960s the United States government was greatly influenced by the Black and White binary paradigm, using it as the basis for educational decisions. During the 1960s, the United States population was nearly 86% White, 10% Black and 4% Latino. Because of this demographic ethnic snapshot, significant educational changes occurred for African Americans. Although Chicanos/Latinos have dealt with many of the same issues, their increasing numbers merited neither equal treatment nor the opening of Chicano/Latino colleges or universities. There are outlying exceptions to this rule. For instance, Chapa and De la Rosa (2004) noted that in an effort to demonstrate good faith, in 1992, the federal government did warrant community colleges and universities with Chicano/Latino enrollments of 25% or more to be recognized as

Hispanic Serving Institutes (HSI's). This designation resulted in increased federal funding for programs to serve the needs of this student population.

Thus, historically in the United States, problems and solutions with regard to race were first articulated and addressed with African Americans in mind. These articulations and solutions – built on the notion of the Black and White binary – were then used as models for addressing the needs of other minorities. However, a certain unforeseen negative consequence emerged from the application of this paradigm to the unique requirements of other ethnic groups. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), the Black and White binary is a mindset, or paradigm, historically prevalent in the discussion of race issues in the academy. The problem with this binary mindset has been that it has only focused on Blacks and Whites, excluding the history and experience of other minorities. In the Black and White binary, other minority groups had to compare their issues to those of African Americans to obtain recognition, while Whiteness continues as the standard.

According to Hayes-Bautista (2004), Chicanos/Latinos “went beyond white to transparent; they simply disappeared” (p. 31). He noted that, in the 1930s the United States Census Bureau categorized Chicanos/Latinos as Mexicans because of their mixed heritage, but by 1940, they were re-categorized as white, which continued from 1950 through 1970. The distinction of race was not utilized for census enumeration, only for property and employment purposes. Chicanos/Latinos questioned whether they existed as a race because their identification was excluded from official documents such as birth, marriage, and death certificates. In 1994, according to Gracia and De Greiff (2000), Chicanos/Latinos who identified as White-Hispanics “campaign[ed] to be called white if they were to be racialized” (p. 33).

The Black and White binary paradigm has continued to exist. Reporting on the effects of this paradigm, Valenzuela (1999) stated that, “it divests youth of important social and cultural resources, leaving them progressively vulnerable to academic failure” (p. 3). Hayes-Bautista (2004) noted that part of the problem is related to Chicanos/Latinos being historically defined by others concerning what is appropriate in modern society, and any difference is rejected. Pizarro (2005) also noted that the racial and political climate of schools is a determining factor in whether or not Chicanos/Latinos fit. Once those in schools determine that Chicano/Latino students do not fit, these students are reminded of their “inferior status in the school’s racial hierarchy” (p. 76).

Chicano/Latino academic achievement K-12. Historically, Chicanos/Latinos have underachieved in U.S. schools due to both external and internal factors. Educational researchers (Darder, 1997; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Gándara, 1995; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Valencia, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999) agreed that the existing institutional barriers are exacerbations to the mobility of individuals who are outside the mainstream culture or who have difficulty navigating the structure and culture of the education system. Fry (2002) stated that, although many matriculate in K-12 schooling, the increase in dropouts also excludes many from an education.

According to deficit theory, the individual’s culture and environment come together to negatively impact chances of success (Valencia, 1997). The author added that deficit thinking is practiced through the use of “educational policies/practices that are fueled by class and racial prejudice:” the main focus is placed on an individual’s characteristics and family (p. 4). Those who adhere to deficit models most often blame deficiencies on culture, community and language. Caravantes (2006) stated that Chicanos/Latinos are falling behind because “the Latino culture is the culprit and the final arbiter between success and failure” (p. viii), affecting career and future

prospects. He disagreed with other researchers who placed the blame on society, stating it is an evasion of responsibility to “blame society and say that discrimination is at work” (p. viii).

However, Valenzuela (1999) challenged this premise by elevating the use of culture as a form of social capital in helping Chicano/Latino students navigate the system. Chapa and Schink (2006) also argued that Chicanos/Latinos should use their social networks to enter new environments.

While barriers exist, there are still stories of hope when students deconstruct and overcome racism.

In a study of academic achievement, Gándara (1995) noted that success is found in “unlikely places” (p. 1). She utilized the follow-back, retrospective method that engaged individuals through a semi-structured interview format. The study consisted of fifty participants, thirty males and twenty females. The author focused on “extraordinary outcomes for individuals from less than ordinary circumstances” (p. 11). The findings revealed that the top factor in the participants’ academic success was their own personal persistence. The “inner drive” (p. 113) in students was the result of having parents who modeled the behavior while validating the students’ experiences.

Darder (1997) argued that, to promote Chicano/Latino contributions to mainstream society, their education must result in their ability to “deconstruct racism and other forms of discrimination inherent in the traditional enterprise of academia” (p. xvii). Gándara (1995) argued that by not challenging the system to change its institutional structure and to hear the voices of those denied access, the system “maintains the economic and social status quo” (p. 5).

In an ethnographic study, Espinoza-Herold (2003) highlighted the students understanding of their own experiences in education. She reported that Chicanos/Latinos are usually placed in urban schools in which services are “slower, less personal and bureaucratic” (p. 3). Chapa and

Schink (2006) indicated that Chicanos/Latinos are “three times more likely than whites to attend high schools where graduation is not the norm” (p. 45). In Espinoza-Herold’s study, two U.S. high school students of Mexican descent, one immigrant and one native born, provided in-depth accounts of their educational experiences. In addition, thirty-three high school educators and administrators were surveyed regarding student engagement and success in the educational process. Espinoza-Herold concluded that the academic success of Chicanos/Latinos is impeded through the lack of acknowledgement of these students’ experiences, community, and social reality in school curricula; this in turn results in lack of interest and motivation.

According to Espinoza-Herold (2003), the students also noted that mainstream teachers had opposing views of what success means to Chicano/Latino students and acknowledged feeling as if the education system was blaming the students for its deficiencies. She added that students are held accountable at the institutional level for the deficiencies of the system and that often even the individual educators “blame the students” (p. 133). Madrid (1986) agreed with this premise, concluding that “the educational system continues to blame the victim for its own failures” (p. ix) rather than make the necessary changes. The findings revealed the wide variety of structural societal factors and school-based factors that are impediments to the success of Chicanos/Latinos.

Romo and Falbo (1996) tracked students for a period of four-years in a longitudinal study in which they utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches. They collected information from 100 students of Mexican origin identified by the Texas School District as being at risk of dropping out. They also interviewed and collected information from the students’ parents. Romo and Falbo looked at various factors, such as “tracking of students, grade retention, high standards, gang involvement, teen motherhood, immigrant needs,

administrative glitches, and punitive school policies” (p. 3), including the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum skills. This instrument was later replaced by the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, which continued to have effects on Chicano/Latino students’ success. The study’s results indicated that major changes need to occur in the educational system to increase the success and retention of Chicano/Latino students.

Bohon, Macpherson and Atilas (2005) focused on barriers to Chicano/Latino education. The researchers utilized a multi-method quantitative and qualitative approach (the McCracken long in-depth interview), and focus groups, to capture the voices of the educational workers and the student and family recipients of services provided to the Latino community. Two groups of participants were randomly selected. The researchers chose the State of Georgia as a setting for their study because Georgia had the largest increase in both Chicano/Latino population and in dropout rate. Chicanos/Latinos had traditionally settled only in California, Texas, and the Southwest, mostly working in the service sector. More recently, Chicanos/Latinos are settling in other areas within the United States where they serve as under-paid migrant workers or service providers. Bohon et al. noted that this change to other parts of the United States was important to follow. They further noted that, even though there was a triple increase in the Chicano/Latino population, this did not result in an increased graduation rate. The data showed that only the dropout rate had increased:

Georgia has the lowest graduation rates of all the states, with only 54% of the class of 1998 graduating from high school. The graduation rates for Latino students in this class were also the lowest in the country, with only 32% graduating (p. 48).

According to Bohon et al. (2005), Chicano/Latino dropout rates could be attributed to “segmented assimilation” (p. 44), in which Chicanos/Latinos are assumed to adapt to society but in reality become immersed and characterized as the underclass. This theory has resulted in the

perpetuation of the ethnic Black and White binary: “In Georgia there are only Black and White people. They don’t know what to do. You’re not White, so they either treat you like you’re Black, or they just ignore you” (p. 52). The findings revealed that Chicanos/Latinos were affected by both external and internal factors, meaning that as a group, they: (a) lacked understanding of the school system, (b) experienced low parental involvement, and (c) lacked residential stability, and that (d) the state had limited support services to meet Chicano/Latino needs, (e) had few incentives for the continuation of Chicano/Latino education, and (f) barred immigrant access to higher education. This study was important because it showed that Chicanos/Latinos face multiple barriers to their academic success and their adaptation to mainstream society.

In summary, these studies showed that at every level of the education system there was a deficit mindset concerning Chicanos/Latinos. Chicanos/Latinos, from a very young age, are met with poor services, stereotypes, low expectations and racism. Gándara (1995), Gándara & Contreras (2009), Espinoza-Herold (2003), Kever (2009), Romo and Falbo (1996), Bohon, Macpherson and Atilas, (2005), Valencia (2002; 2005) Valenzuela (1999; 2000) and Yosso (2006) all asserted that Chicano/Latino students could no longer be blamed for their lack of inclusion in the education system and its failure to change. Hence, the California Master Plan identified that the community colleges were to provide access to the underserved, underrepresented and undereducated.

Community Colleges and the California Master Plan. Under the 1960-1975 California Master Plan for Higher Education (The Master Plan Survey Team, 1960), all students were to have equal access within the three tiers of the education system: the UC system, the CSU system, and the California community college system. The main objective of the community colleges

was to balance student distribution of future college enrollment projected through high school trends. Community colleges were intended to give opportunities to those who had been underrepresented, underserved, underprepared and undereducated. Thus, California community colleges became the core foundation of higher education, and were required by law to allow all students entry. Enrollment of nontraditional students entering the community college system was accelerated as a result. Despite the inclusivity and support intended by the requirements of the master plan, the number of dropouts from the education system continued to increase.

Chapa and Schink (2006) examined the role of the community college and the extent to which its purpose has been accomplished. They questioned whether the community college “is a means for academic and educational advancement or an educational dead end for [Chicanos]/Latinos” (p. 42). Chapa and Schink (2006) noted that the following factors continue to affect Chicanos/Latinos’ ability to transfer: systemic barriers, financial situation, parents’ educational level, minimal space at the University level, and no standardized requirements across the community colleges. The transition between the community college and the CSU is easier due to overlapping requirements, which creates a problem for students who prefer to transfer to the UC. They concluded with three final points: 1) transfer slots are not growing compared to enrollment; 2) the process works against Chicanos/Latinos due to the lower income levels of their parents as compared to their white counterparts; and 3) the system works better for students with educated parents whose opportunities have better prepared them to understand how the system works. Chapa and Schink added that the California Master Plan does not work for Chicano/Latino students due to factors other than race, and that these factors are not considered in the preparation process for students transferring to schools of higher education.

Researchers with the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Chicano Studies Research Center (Rivas, Perez, Alvarez and Solorzano, 2007) reported a decrease in access for Chicano/Latino students entering the university. At every level, the numbers revealed an increase in population and a decrease in transfer rates. If fewer students are transferring to the university, more are succeeding at dropping out of the education system. This inequality has resulted in intensified disparity and reduction of opportunities for Chicano/Latino students (Retrieved October 20, 2007 <http://www.chicano.ucla.edu>).

Jaschik (2007) also reported a mismatch in California transfer rates for Chicanos/Latinos. Personnel in the chancellor's office gathered enrollment statistics from 109 of its community colleges, disaggregating the data by ethnicity. The enrollment data indicated that the Chicano/Latino student demographics (Chicano/Latino students numbered 809, 271) were very close to that of the non-Hispanic Whites (who numbered 936,940), and 2.5 times higher than the figure for Asian enrollment (Retrieved September 13, 2008, <https://misweb.cccco.edu/onlinestat/studentdemo>). However, despite increased Chicano/Latino students' enrollment, due to the new direction regarding matriculation taken by the community college system, state agencies reported the following: of every 100 first-time Chicano/Latino students, 75 enter community colleges, 17 enter CSU, and eight enter UC. Of the 75 at community colleges, an average of only seven transfer to four-year universities, six to CSU and one to UC. Based on this information, approximately 91% of Chicanos/Latinos drop out of community colleges (Retrieved October 20, 2007, from <http://www.insidehighered.com>).

Chavez (2008) reported that Chicano/Latino students at the community colleges are "faced with both personal and structural conditions" (p. 4) that are impediments to navigation of the education system and seamless transition to a four-year university. Chavez noted that

Chicanos/Latinos face obstacles embedded within the institutional structure. Furthermore, she stated that policies and procedures have important roles within the community college structure, resulting in differences in transfer resources and requirements within the system. Chavez declared that funding for the community college system is disproportionately low considering the increased need of supplies and life expenses that students face. She also revealed that although Chicanos/Latinos do transfer, those who complete an Associate's degree at the community college tend to be more successful. She concluded that as Chicanos/Latinos matriculate into the community college system, more enroll in basic skills courses and only a limited number enroll as full-time students. In addition, she reported that Chicanos/Latinos overall did better in English than mathematics, noting that mathematics is a major barrier for Chicanos/Latinos, resulting in limitations of career opportunities in certain disciplines.

Another concern presented by Gill and Leigh (2004) in a report for the Public Policy Institute of California was the importance of the location of the community colleges to Chicano/Latino students' success. Community colleges in which transfer specializations were offered were located closer to UC and CSU campuses. Community colleges with specializations in vocational education were located in communities of minority populations with greater concentrations of Chicano/Latino students. According to the report,

It is apparent that California community colleges enroll on average a much higher percentage of Hispanic students and a much lower percentage of white students than do community colleges nationally. Indeed, nine campuses mostly in the Los Angeles Basin and south San Diego fall into the category of "predominantly Hispanic-serving institutions"(PHIs), defined as those whose student bodies are over 50 percent Hispanic. A total of 47 community colleges, including the PHIs, fall into the more numerous "Hispanic Serving Institutions" (HSIs) category, defined as those whose student bodies are 25% or more Hispanic. Imperial Valley College near the Mexican border reports the maximum proportion of Hispanic students (85.6 percent). (p. 44)

Furthermore, vocational programs assist to provide immediate integration into the workforce. However, the units completed for vocational certificates do not fulfill the transfer requirements to a four-year university, nor do they count towards an associate's degree.

Kever (2009) noted that in Texas, Chicanos/Latinos enrollment went up to 3.9 % from 3.7 % in the last eight years. Although growth of the racial population of Chicano/Latinos went up by 50%, two-thirds of this increase enrolled in community colleges instead of four-year universities. In addition, the majority of Chicano/Latino enrollment is concentrated at the system's border schools (Retrieved April 12, 2009 from <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/moms/6359209.html>).

Chapa and Schink (2006) revealed that although the rates of completion of community college by Chicano/Latino students is comparable to the rates of their peers, they still fall behind in the attainment of bachelor's degrees. The authors also reported that Chicano/Latino students earn only 5% of all bachelor's degrees while White students earn 27.9% nationwide. Finally, they stated that Chicano/Latino students may actually be hindered in their entrance to the university systems because of the various challenges they continue to face in the community college.

Based on the California Master Plan, the purpose of the community colleges was to provide access to all students. Since the implementation of this plan, as the general population has grown and the economy has made the cost of four-year university education prohibitive for many, community colleges have become more appealing because of their low cost and the option of transferring to a four-year university. The master plan also contained requirements for high school students' entry to each tier in the university system: the top tier, UC, only admitted the top 12% of high school graduates; the second tier, CSU, admitted the top one-third of high

school graduates; the third tier, the community colleges, were to admit all other students seeking to continue their education (Chapa and Schink, 2006). This “open door admission policy” (p. 42) has been one of the major benefits of community colleges. On the other hand, there are still attitudes of exclusion that continue to exist regardless of what the California Master Plan proposed to resolve. For example, during the February 17, 2010 meeting of the Joint Committee of the Master Plan for Higher Education/California State Legislature: Joint informational Hearing California Higher Education, Affordability, and Financial Aid, Chair Gloria Negrete-Mcleod stated the following:

When the Master Plan was written back in the 60’s we had a heck of a lot less people. And while this legislature still believes in the Philosophy of Education, there is nowhere in the Master Plan that it said that education is a right. It is that we have access for all students. (Retrieved on February 20, 2010 from <http://www.calchannel.com/>).

The interpretation of the California Master Plan, especially around the issue of whether education is a right or a privilege, is critical for the success of Chicanos/Latinos. More importantly who will define “access” and the difference between defacto or dejure access. On the state level, although the master plan included access for Chicanos/Latinos, the State of California still faced issues of system accountability, retention and success. Jaschik (1987) reported the major discrepancies in the retention of Chicanos/Latinos in education nationally:

A coalition of Hispanic associations sued the state of Texas last week, contending that the state had discriminated against Mexican Americans by failing to help them obtain education at public four-year colleges and universities... the coalition charged that Texas has not done enough to help gain admission to and graduate from college. (p. 1)

Person and Rosenbaum (2006) noted that although officials of community college have increased Chicano/Latino enrollment, these students still lag behind in the completion of higher education. Flores, Horn and Crisp (2006) affirmed this premise, asserting the need for further

research to illuminate the difference between those who enroll and “those who are actually served” (p. 77). However, Yosso (2006) challenged the premise of access, arguing that there is limited access in the community colleges for Chicano/Latino students due to “misinformation, over crowdedness along with limited access to courses, counselors, professors and other support services” (p. 100). On the other hand, Caravantes (2006) disputed research that blamed the lack of Chicano/Latino progress on the education system. He indicated that “perhaps no one has thought to look at the Latino culture itself as the culprit” (p. viii), blaming the deficiencies of the system on the students.

Chapa and Schink (2006) agreed that community college has become the vehicle for nontraditional students to return to school to enhance their economic mobility and improve their lives. However, although the community college is a major pathway, few of these students transfer to four-year universities. The authors further agreed that, community colleges do help Chicanos/Latinos succeed but there are still “massive leaks in the pipeline” (p. 49). Specifically, while education is the avenue to reduce poverty (and this is important), when working toward reducing poverty it is not enough simply to become educated or to encourage this path for Chicanos/Latinos; it is just as critical to understand the historical educational trajectory of Chicano/Latino student’ experiences.

In summary, community colleges were designed to serve those individuals in the education system who fall through the cracks. Community colleges have been sought most by displaced workers, immigrants, low-income students, working adults, remedially skilled students, underserved minorities and women. However, researchers reported that due to institution policies and requirement inconsistencies, students who need the most help are plagued by barriers that impede their academic advancement. Considering the overall purpose of

community colleges, access has been recognized as a positive point but the lack of retention, graduation and transfer rates to higher education of Chicanos/Latinos has been noted as a system failure. Marklein (2008) called community colleges the direct link to the nation's economic future; thus, if this nation plans to continue being the leading force in the world, those who are least prepared to enter four-year universities must be educated (Retrieved on July 26, 2008 <http://usatoday.printthis.clickability.com>).

Counseling Chicano/Latino students. In 1995, the Academic Senate passed a resolution regarding the role of counseling faculty in the California Community Colleges (CCC) that resulted from an increased demand for services. Community college counselors were mandated to provide counseling for a wide range of areas of a student's life, including academic, career, and personal, with extensive coordination to both traditional and nontraditional students. In addition, within the matriculation requirements, counselors were to deliver special services to students who were identified in basic skills courses, who were undeclared, and who were in early alert programs. Furthermore, as reported in the 1997 Standards of Practice for California Community Colleges, counseling programs are an important component for student success. College counseling is both essential and "required by law" (p. 7). According to the Academic Senate, community college counselors must provide distinctive support to students:

Counseling faculty play many roles to combat that sobering statistic and help meet the mission of California Community Colleges. For example, counselors can deter students from disastrous self-placements and impossible workloads—the causes of many of their failures. They can help students develop hope, confidence and commitment to realistic aspirations. They can also help students whose academic abilities do not yet match their aspirations. Thus, colleges have the obligation to provide counseling programs to help students decide what they want from higher education, plan their route through the system to achieve these goals, and help them overcome the barriers that may impede progress toward those goals (p. 7) (Retrieved on October 23, 2008 [http://users.scc.spokane.edu/BDonley/docs/role of the counseling fac in the california ccs.pdf](http://users.scc.spokane.edu/BDonley/docs/role%20of%20the%20counseling%20fac%20in%20the%20california%20ccs.pdf)).

Tinto (1993) agreed, asserting that counseling and other student services are critical in the first year of the student's experience in college. Counselors play an integral role in the educational process. King (1993) claimed that counseling is the most critical service for students in regard to retention and transfer in the community college. Chacón, Cohen and Strover (1986) stated that students interested in transferring to four-year universities require more information and attention than they generally receive. Therefore, the counselor must be the conduit to guide students in their academic progress and help them navigate the college system.

Sue and Sue (1990) argued that when counseling the culturally diverse, different variables must be considered and generalizations are to be avoided. Brown and Rivas (1993) noted that, "counselors are key links between students of color and higher education" (p. 93). They argued that counselors have a responsibility to learn about the cultural values and educational experiences of the students they serve. Furthermore, they stated that, because counselors are on the "front lines" (p. 84), they must be aware of the various issues students face in order to provide effective guidance. Brown and Rivas (1993) concurred that counselors must consider the previous experiences of students of color with regard to "racism and prejudice" (p. 86).

For example, Nazario (2007) interviewed hundreds of Latino youths who "had made their way north on top of freight trains" (p. 270) whereby they experienced discrimination. According to Nazario, counselors and staff must understand and be aware of the different experiences Latinos bring with them to school. She noted that, in the case of newly arrived Latino immigrant students, the counselor must understand that the student is facing transitional unification issues related to the emotional scars, rejection, resentment, abuse, and neglect they have experienced. She added that, once in high school, more than half of the students requesting to see a counselor

note that they have “*problemas familiares*” (p. 245) or family problems. Sanford-Harris (1993) agreed that understanding the issues is important; however, counselors must also teach students strategies to assist them in self-direction that will result in the students making better life choices.

The Academic Senate for the California community college system (1995) required counselors to provide personal counseling to students also:

Personal counseling is also critical to ensure the success of many of our students. Young students experiencing the stress of their transition into adulthood, and re-entry students balancing the burdens of work, family and academics are both bound to face times of conflict and confusion, where their goals are undermined by their personal conflicts. Students with psychological disabilities... protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act, must also receive assistance. Students who experience crisis situations while on campus need to be assisted with sensitive counseling. Personal counseling benefits many kinds of students, helping them manage their difficult life situations while they progress in college. (p. 11).

As students confront different situations in their lives, counseling is essential. Greene (1966) agreed and indicated that counselors have a responsibility to reach out as partners and connect with students.

Brown and Rivas (1993) argued that Counselors must distinguish the cultural variables when dealing with students of color. Therefore, each counseling session should be different because each student comes with a unique individual experience. Chacón et al. (1986) reported that Chicanos/Latinos face more challenges pertaining to their academic success than do their Anglo counterparts. Females were faced with especially increased demands. The research was carried out through a cross-sectional design to allow for a multivariate analysis focused on the impact of gender on student progress and the barriers to their perseverance in completing their educational goals. The study sample consisted of 508 women and 160 men. The participants were selected from five different higher education institutions (one UC campus, three CSU campuses, and one community college campus). The study was focused on students of Mexican

descent. The researchers found that more Chicanas enrolled in the community college system and that Chicanas were older and had major domestic responsibilities. Chacón et al. also noted that students in the community college system demonstrated significant contrast specifically between Chicano/Latino males and Chicana/Latina females. Chicanas/Latinas overwhelmingly entered the community college as non-traditional students. As non-traditional students they were older, worked more hours, and came from low socio-economic status. The researcher claimed that age was a factor at each campus and that officials at each institution recruited a specific type of student.

Chacón et al. (1986) concluded that because these students were less likely to seek support services because of their schedules, counseling methods needed to change to meet the needs of this student population. The researchers noted that counseling in the areas of remediation, slow academic progress, and length of time in a program tended to be very limited, not available, or inadequately delivered. They stated that, although their findings revealed that Chicano/Latino students' were motivated to obtain degrees, their slow progress needed to be evaluated by counselors in efforts to retain these students and to assist them in completing their programs.

In another study, Muñoz (1986) affirmed that "the university must know the needs of its students: where they come from, who they are, what they need. Problems must be viewed not only as individual issues but as social and institutional ones as well" (p. 147). Muñoz conducted the mixed-methods research study in California. Participants were selected from two UC campuses and two CSU campuses. The sample included 342 Chicano/Latino students and 120 Anglo students. The focus of the study was on the Chicano/Latino students experience in four-year institutions of higher education. Students were compared to determine the different levels

of stress specific to the problems that Chicano/Latino students face because of the “adjustment demand” (p. 134) that results in additional stress factors. The first phase of the study included structured one-on-one interviews one hour in length. Participants also responded to a demographic questionnaire and to a quantitative instrument, the College Environmental Stress Index, which was subdivided into four parts (financial, academic, familial, and personal) within both external and internal factors.

The results indicated that Chicano/Latino students were extremely affected by these factors, more so than their white counterparts. Chicano/Latino students reported that finances were a major stress that made it difficult to focus on their academic goals. Chicano/Latino students were greatly concerned about having to work, accruing debt, being able to support themselves, and contributing to their families’ welfare and well-being. Chicano/Latino students reported that academically they felt as if they did not belong – they felt alienated. They also felt the pressure of being judged for asking for help and of not meeting their instructors’ expectations. In addition, family concerns were a contributing stress factor for Chicano/Latino students, who were affected by the personal and health issues faced by their family members.

Muñoz claimed that Chicano/Latino students deal with more personal stress. He stated that personal stress is “less visible and less discussed, and usually more difficult to describe, and can be a great drain on students’ mental energy” (p. 143). Furthermore, Chicano/Latino students deal with more stress due to their own personal problems. Moreover, when the students are to meet their friends’ parents who are of other social and ethnic backgrounds they experience added stress. According to Muñoz, in every aspect of the study, Chicano/Latino students reported higher stress factors that affect their success. Chicana/Latina females had the worst stress levels compared to both Anglos and Chicano/Latino males.

Rendon (2002) argued that nontraditional students, such as Chicanos/Latinos, need a different counseling approach, one that is active and will sustain them in college. She stated that the retention of Chicanos/Latinos required that “counselors believe in students more than students believe in themselves” (p. 663). Brown and Rivas (1993) agreed with Rendon, noting that the counselor’s support is crucial because “often, students of color come to college with low self-esteem and confidence due to their prior experiences in education” (p. 90). Muñoz (1986) also noted in his study that Chicano/Latino students experience more anxiety due to their adjustment to the new environment and that, in general, the “theme of insecurity is prevalent in Chicano/Latino students” (p. 142). According to Brown and Rivas, even if ethnicity is not shared between counselor and counselee, “all students need a mentor” (p. 85). They concluded that, when counselors demonstrate concern and encourage students to “excel rather than persist” (p. 93), counselors make a difference in student success and their educational experiences.

Rendon’s Validation Theory (1994) encourages a specific approach that enables and supports nontraditional students to succeed and learn. Rendon explained that through the application of Validation Theory students can develop relationships with their mentor who can provide guidance and model the optimal possibility of success in education. Rendon lists six aspects of the theory:

1. Validation is an enabling, confirming, and supportive process initiated by in-and-out-of-class agents who foster academic and interpersonal development.
2. When validation is present, students feel capable of learning, and this increases confidence.
3. Like involvement, validation is a prerequisite to student development.
4. Validation can occur through various agents both in and out of class.

5. Validation suggests a developmental process.
6. Validation is most effective when offered in the early weeks of class (p. 44).

Rendon (1996) emphasized that a counselor can deter students through tests and counseling focused on employment rather than on education. In her own experience, Rendon (1996) reported that “due to poor counseling, it was too late to apply to a four-year university and the local community college was not offering any courses” (p. 283) in her discipline of study. Gándara (1995) noted that students who had not met the college requirements of their academic achievement indicted their counselors for placing them in the vocational and non-college courses instead of the college preparatory track. Students “interpreted this as an expression of racism” (p. 61). However, Pizarro (2005) asserted that students who seek appropriate guidance from counselors are more successful in climbing the educational ladder. In the case of Chicanos/Latinos, Rendon (1996) noted that counselors assist with the dissemination of necessary information to prepare students to transfer to four-year universities. Furthermore, Chicano/Latino students must be able to depend on counselors for guidance and information in order to complete their educational and career goals.

However, Orozco, Thomas and Woodlief (2003) asserted that although counselors are critical in the equation of retention and transfer, community college counselors are overwhelmed by disproportionate ratios of 1700:1, and that these ratios continue to rise. They reported that long waiting periods to see a counselor continue to be frustrating for students within the system. These counseling barriers result in limited access to pertinent information that students need to fulfill their educational goals. The authors concluded that without the appropriate information, students’ are “taking courses they do not need, wast[ing] precious time, or even drop[ping] out” (p. 153). Counseling can assist in essential ways in informing the student and should be started

earlier within the process. Kever (2009) added that in the state of Texas 250 counseling centers were placed in middle and high schools to improve college counseling; however, no data was provided that measured outcomes for Chicano/Latino students.

In summary, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (1995) report indicated that the state is aware of the problem in counseling, and has developed a policy to solidify the role of the counselor. However, researchers claimed that counseling services are still limited, providing least to those who are at risk of dropping out of college. Researchers also noted the importance of understanding students' experiences and backgrounds to better serve their needs. These external challenges are affecting Chicano/Latino students internally.

Internal Factors that Affect Chicanos/Latinos

Several internal factors were identified as affecting the academic success of Chicano/Latino students. These are covert factors not always obvious to Chicano/Latino students that may result in increased internalized oppression, low self-esteem, and silencing. These factors included cultural adaptation, gender roles, specific manifestations and enforcements of oppression supported by educational institutions. These factors have resulted in individual conflict and incongruent behaviors for Chicano/Latino students.

The complexity of Latino cultural adaptation in America. Acculturation is the social phenomenon of individuals of one culture being expected to adapt to the requirements of a dominant culture. Acculturation Theory speaks to the internal world of the individual and the personal, emotional, cognitive, institutional and cultural forces that promote or hinder the individual's success in context educational or otherwise. Berry (1980) noted that acculturation "requires the contact of at least two autonomous cultural groups; there must be a change in one or the other of the two groups which results from the contact" (p. 10). Berry and Padilla (1980)

described the depth and complexity of acculturation, noting that it may be defined with a variety of terms: assimilation, integration, rejection and deculturalization. In addition, different methods of acculturation exist for individuals and groups: adjustment, rejection, and withdrawal. Berry indicated the importance of recognizing that acculturation is a process, beginning with contact, shifting to conflicts or crisis, and resulting in adaptation for some. It does not happen instantly. Stanton-Salazar (2001) agreed and explained the importance of recognizing the negative, indelible scars created through forced acculturation and the accompanying stress caused in children.

Moreover, Padilla (1980) identified the two essential elements of acculturation as cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty. With cultural awareness, individuals must have in-depth knowledge both of their own culture and of the host culture. Even when one understands the differences between the two cultures, other variables can result in either lessening or increasing acculturation. Concerning the concepts of assimilation and acculturation, Hurtado and Gurin (2004) stated that those making decisions do not include power or race as a factor in cultural adaptation. Acculturation is a process that is interpreted differently by ethnic minorities.

Spring (2004) defined acculturation as a form of deculturalization, an “educational process of destroying a people’s culture and replacing it with a new culture” (p. 3). However, Grossman (1984) noted that individuals who maintain their original culture, or are between two cultures, have a more difficult time in society. He asserted that Chicanos/Latinos are affected more profoundly by the degree of acculturation: those who do not acculturate tend to have more fear, lack trust in others, are affected more profoundly by the proscription of gender roles, and lack confidence and self-esteem while those who do acculturate have less difficulty adjusting to the norms of the host culture. He added that, because of the pressure to acculturate,

Chicanos/Latinos may develop an imbalance that results in internal conflict and difficulty in maintaining their cultural identity. Pizarro (2005) argued that “without a doubt race is a crucial lens through which Chicanos/Latinos are defined” (p. 223).

Rodriguez (2010) spells out the overt racism that Chicanos/Latinos are living with presently. He stated that, “it is no longer a Manifest Destiny it now is a Manifest Insanity” for Chicanos/Latinos. The overt racism that Rodriguez analyzed pervades academic institutions, affecting Chicano/Latino students and Raza Studies departments. He noted that the challenges that Raza studies face in higher education due to this new insanity and lack of respect for differences is creating a snowball affect in many states within the United States and fueling the undeniable anti-Mexican and anti-immigrant sentiment. He revealed the following:

The best Raza Studies critics attempt to dehumanize Mexicans/Chicanos. In their conjured up narrative, Mexicans/Chicanos are neither legitimate Americans, nor legitimate human beings. Neither are they afforded the status of Indigenous peoples; at best, they are mongrels, undeserving of full human rights. This dominant narrative is dependent upon this process of de-Indigenization and dehumanization. Those of us that cannot be deported (can't wait for next year's Arizona battle over the 14th amendment and birthright citizenship) are welcome here, as long as we participate in our own assimilation or ethnic cleansing and are happily subservient and willing to accept this nation's mythologized narrative. (Retrieved on June 17, 2010 from <http://web.me.com/columnoftheamericas/>).

This is Rodriguez's definition of Manifest Insanity. As stated above, the effects of Manifest Insanity are widespread. Not only do Chicanos/Latinos have to deal with racism through American society that effects their experiences and chances in higher education, they also struggle at school (K-12) and at home.

Family and school conflicts. The struggle for survival for Chicanos/Latinos exists at home as well as at school and often is exacerbated by the incongruence of the expectations of these two institutions. (Castellanos, and Jones, 2003). Valencia (2002) declared that unraveling

the effects of this incongruence between home expectation and school expectations on the Chicano/Latino student is a major challenge for researchers.

According to Grossman (1984), family in the Chicano/Latino culture is the “most valued institution” (p. 127). It is in family that Chicanos/Latinos place their loyalties. Romo and Falbo (1996) noted that there is a cultural dissonance that Chicano/Latino students face both at school and at home. According to Orozco (2003), “family and school were two separate entities; like oil and water, they never mixed—they seemed to repel one another” (p. 131). If the family is not aware of the demands of the school, it is difficult to value the efforts of their children. Castellanos and Jones (2003) noted that the incongruence between the institutions of family and education results in conflict. Moreover, the conflict creates an internal unrest in the student that they don’t understand, and of which they sometimes are not even aware. Anzaldúa (1987) defined this conflict as *el choque*: the internal cultural collision whereby these cultures and their value systems collide.

On the contrary, much like deficit-thinking theorists, Caravantes (2006) presented a contrasting opinion, believing that one chooses to succeed, and challenged Chicanos/Latinos to be more astute in selecting adaptive aspects of the Anglo-Saxon culture that would help them navigate between both cultures successfully. Caravantes coined the term *selective cultural adoption*, which means “that one freely picks the best that one’s native culture has to offer and the best that the American culture has to offer” (p. ix). Despite his position on keeping what works within the culture for Chicanos/Latinos through selective cultural adoption, Caravantes added that learning does not happen for Chicanos/Latinos because they “avoid this effort out of sheer mental laziness and fear of sounding inept as they attempt to speak English” (p. xi). Caravantes noted that, although adopting the language is one of the key factors for success,

Chicanos/Latinos in the United States have become problematic because they argue that if they lose the use of their language they will be stripped of their identity. Although Caravantes (2006) agreed with Padilla (1980) that acculturation is a process involving psychological shifts, he asserted that the reality for Chicanos/Latinos is more complex. Arguing that his own adoption of a new language never required him to change his identity, he reduced Chicanos/Latinos' resistance to adaptation to "a lazy man's excuse for not going through the terribly difficult process of learning a new language as an adult" (p. xi).

Padilla (1980) also noted that acculturation is a complex process but disagreed with Caravantes' diagnosis of laziness. In his empirical, mixed methods study, Padilla measured cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty. He selected 381 Mexican Americans – 68 males and 313 females – to participate. The participants engaged in two interviews and responded to a questionnaire of 584 questions focused on five variables for acculturation: sex, generation, education, income and ethnic density of neighborhood. The findings revealed that acculturation is not simple, that each of the above variables makes likely important differences in the process. For instance, acculturation does become simpler for third and fourth generations. Regardless of generation, however, cultural adaptation does not happen instantly, often taking years to occur. In addition, regardless of the presence of the variables above, individuals undergoing acculturation may experience psychological responses resulting from cultural separation.

Rodriguez (1982), writing about his process of acculturation, stated that "education altered his life" (p. 5). He did not like to be seen as a minority, but his skin tone was always a reminder. At home, he was reminded that his dark skin was connected to poverty. When he became a professor at UC Berkeley, Rodriguez felt that students of color sought his support because of the color of his skin. He felt regarded by minority students as the "coconut—

someone brown on the outside, white on the inside. I was the bleached academic—more white than Anglo professors” (p. 162). He assimilated by completely disassociating himself from his past and his culture: “I had long before accepted the fact that education exacted a great price for its equally great benefits” (p. 160). Gándara and Contreras (2009) added that the pursuit of education may exact an even higher price from Latino males than females. They noted that males have a harder time in education because the institution has been categorized as feminine – that school is categorized as “girl stuff” (p. 27). Furthermore, Chicano/Latino males who aspire to education “reported being accused by lower performing peers of ‘acting white’ (p. 75).

On the other hand, Rendon (1996) addressed the problem of acculturation in light of economic class; in her household, education was considered to be only for the “elite and wealthy” (p. 282). Education was abstract to students like her. She describes an unspoken expectation that students were to succeed with “no guidance, to have clarity about our vague dreams and goals, to express ourselves in rational, analytic forms, and to put aside our personal anxieties and frustrations so that we could be successful in college” (p. 283). On her journey, she faced academic, ethnic and racial shock because of her minority status. Rendon (1996) dealt with gender, family and cultural demands yet, unlike Rodriguez, she argued that one does not have to give up one’s past to succeed or to assimilate: “The past is always with you and the past is what provides one’s identity and heritage” (p. 284). Therefore, individuals must “trust and follow their own natural style” (p. 284) to accomplish their goals. It is important to note here that both Caravantes and Rodriguez are controversial figures within Chicano/Latino scholarly circles due to their adherence to the Deficit model. Rendon’s work honors what individual Chicano/Latinos bring, not only validating their experience but re-enforcing their identity.

In summary, Berry and Padilla (1980) argued that acculturation is a process that, for

Chicanos/Latinos, takes time. Each individual's acculturation experience is different and based on the individual's courage and psychological stamina to deal with the challenges that a new culture brings. Romo and Falbo (1996) noted and described a direct cultural dissonance for Chicano/Latino students in terms of acculturation. Stanton-Salazar (2001) asserted that negative results can be expected from forced acculturation. Others, such as Caravantes and Rodriguez (described above) concluded that each individual will have a different perspective concerning acculturation: some may lose their identities to gain their education; for others, their identities are critical links to their past. One author, Caravantes, appealing to the deficit model, believed that acculturation was problematic simply due to subjects' laziness in adapting and sorting through what works from one's past experiences. Ultimately, he asserts that Chicano/Latino individuals must determine their own paths to acculturation or a lack thereof. Caravantes would do well to acknowledge, however, that these individual paths are directed by multiple factors.

Gender roles. One of the most salient factors affecting individual paths to acculturation is the proscription of gender roles. Gándara (1995) stated that family support tends to have a gendered impact on student decisions. Although parents encourage both their sons and daughters, males are specifically told what paths to take, while females are often simply reminded "to do well" (p. 94). Gándara (1995) added that it is commonly assumed that once the Latina gets married, she will not complete her education due to her family responsibilities. Furthermore, because the economic stability of the family is implicated, males are unconsciously pressured to suppress their identities in school (Pizarro, 2005). Often, the first Chicano/Latino male in the family is encouraged to leave school and is expected to help support the family and adopt the male role of provider.

Females are subjected to a different set of pressures, however, which often operate in slightly more covert ways. Anzaldúa (1999) presented an in-depth picture of Chicanas/Latinas unknowingly being trapped within a “cultural collision” affecting the body, spirit, and mind. The lack of personal and spiritual understanding of oneself oppresses the Chicana/Latina.

The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode – nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned (p. 101).

Many demands are placed on Chicanas/Latinas through cultural values: Chicanas/Latinas must be selfless and responsible to be respected. Anzaldúa (1987) explained that, in her Chicana/Latina culture, selfishness is condemned, especially in women. Humility and selflessness are considered virtues.

Vasquez (1997) stated that women deal with gender roles that require them to conform by placing themselves after family and community. Segura (1993) concurred, explaining that Chicanas/Latinas struggle with the conflicting messages they receive from their families. Chicanas/Latinas are forced to “conform to traditional roles that are centered on family life, while pressured by their families to do well in school. The gulf between both sets of expectations [is] a conflict relevant to women” (p. 204).

In examining gender issues within the Chicano/Latino culture more deeply, Anzaldúa (1999) stated that the commonly heard assertion, “you’re nothing but a woman,” means that Chicana/Latina women are defective. The opposite proscription, directed toward males, is to be “un macho,” the implication being that the Chicano/Latino male is privileged. In general, Chicanas/Latinas endure their self-imposed limitations due to their cultural conditioning. As a

result, they are continuously oppressed by both their culture and the majority culture, and experience a marked cognitive dissonance: their own version of *el choque*.

In contrast, Pizarro (2005) claimed that Chicano/Latino males are also burdened with societal stereotypes and are dealt with more violently in society than are Chicanas/Latinas. Chicano/Latino males are “profiled based on skin color, dress, linguistic abilities or patterns, test scores, specific behaviors, socioeconomic status, parent involvement or a combination of these characteristics” (p. 240). The author also noted that Chicano/Latino males deal with specifically gendered pressures from the community and society. Racial profiling, not always a conscious process, is widely exercised by employers, police, and teachers against Chicano males. For example, in the city of San Jose, California, “African Americans and [Chicanos]/Latinos have protested the informal policy that makes DWB (driving while black/brown) an offense in many areas” (p.239). In summary, both Chicano/Latino males and Chicana/Latina females are confronted by gendered pressures.

Educational aspects of oppression. As Chicanos/Latinos travel to their schools, work, or other neighborhoods, they are targeted just “because [of] the color of their skin” (Pizarro, 2005, p. 239). In a study of racial profiling of Chicanos/Latinos, Pizarro found that students are faced with a system in which their educational opportunities are limited because of this approach. School administrators and teachers target students through “racial characteristics that would identify them as troublemaker[s]” (p. 22). In an interview, a student reported: “the school dean got me for wearing big pants. I told him my pants weren’t big” (p. 58). The school official then said, “you’re not in your house; you are in mine now” (p. 58). The student further reported that it is through these constant “racist underpinnings that Chicano/[Latino] students’ become overwhelmed” (p. 59) and leave school.

Gándara (2001) noted that more Chicano/Latino males are dropping out as early as middle school. However, dropout data tend to miss entirely this crucial trend because they are only collected at the high school level. She further reported that gendered pressures contribute to these decisions. Chicanos/Latinos are academically outperformed by Chicanas/Latinas, suggesting males have an inferior academic position. Within the education system, males are also “routinely identified at higher rates for all kinds of learning disabilities” (p. 247). This may impact their higher drop out rate.

Valenzuela’s (1999) three-year study of academic achievement revealed that students are humiliated through everyday experiences in school and are mistreated because of the subtle mistakes they make. For example, a student wrongly placed in a class for six weeks noted, “*A mi me tenían ahí como pendeja, como sorda y muda en esa clase*” (“They had me in there like an idiot, like a deaf mute in that class,” p.135). Another student stated that asking for help was calling unwanted attention to oneself, and could be stigmatizing: “*Como si tuvieramos una enfermedad*” (“Like if we had a disease,” p.135). In another situation, when a teacher sensitive to Chicano/Latino students’ needs left, some students opted to drop out of school all together because they had lost their only connection to school. A letter provided to the school task force by the students listing students’ complaints stated the following:

There is a general lack of respect of students’ dignity and cultural differences. For example, some teachers still continue to tell students not to speak “Spanish.” This goes on even in the halls when the students are passing. Some teachers call students “wetback”—although the teachers may do it jokingly or have that type of *rapor* [sic] with the student, the fact that a teacher uses any derogatory remarks contributes to a student’s disrespect for teachers (p. 55).

Chicano/Latino students continue to be affected by daily racism sent through negative messages – some subtle, some not so subtle. In some cases, this kind of input has had great impact on major decisions that students make regarding their education.

Vasquez (1997) further substantiated that although pressures on Chicana/Latina females in the education system may not always be as readily visible as those explored above, they also deal with an array of barriers such as gender, culture, language differences, and socioeconomic needs while adjusting to new environments, and that these factors also affect their self-esteem. Despite the differing gender expectations to which they are subjected, male and female students of color (including Chicano/Latino and Chicana/Latina) share the experience of racism in school. Tatum (1992) pointed to the burden of processing racism that White students don't share with students of color:

Students of color who have had the opportunity to examine the ways in which racism may have affected their own lives are able to give voice to their own experience, and to validate it rather than be demoralized by it. An understanding of internalized oppression can help students of color recognize the ways in which they may have unknowingly participated in their own victimization or the victimization of others. They may be able to move beyond victimization to empowerment and share their learning with others (p. 23).

If Chicano/Latino students of both genders must grapple not only with the “typical” demands of school that White students confront, but in order to do so effectively must also negotiate their own internalized oppression, they are faced with an extremely difficult task in pursuing their education.

Internalized oppression. Gracia and DeGreiff (2000) agreed with Pizarro (2005) and Gándara (2001) regarding the problems presented by racist attitudes within society. They emphasized that racialization is part of Chicanos/Latinos' lives in the United States. Gracia and DeGreiff (2000) noted that in many cases, Chicanos/Latinos must deal with “racial border control, legal sanctions on cross-racial marriages, and racial identification on nearly every application form from day care to college admissions” (p. 24). Chesler et al. (2005) noted that covert attitudes of racism are disregarded because they are not seen as deliberate. Yosso (2006) indicated that although the low expectations of society towards Chicanos/Latinos may not seem

oppressive to the Chicano/Latino students themselves, such expectations are self-perpetuating unless the Chicanos/Latinos challenge them.

Freire (2000), in analyzing the dynamics of the oppressed and the oppressor, argued that the identification with the oppressor is one of the mechanisms through which a subject is dominated, as identification is a process through which one conforms oneself to the demands of the dominant culture. This process of identification can take a heavy toll. Freire (2000) supported the idea that the oppressed are affected by internal conflict. By understanding the conflict, Chicanos/Latinos can see that the oppressor has taken over their minds and that to be authentic, they must cease to be both the oppressed and the oppressor. Freire declared that “the oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom” (p. 47). Muñoz (1986) noted that Chicanos/Latinos deal with many “psychological ramifications” (p. 147) due to the high levels of stress they experience. As a result, they are often unaware of the sources of their internal issues that affect their self-esteem; this lack of awareness resulting in a split that affects the core of Chicano/Latino existence. Until they face the conflict in themselves, they cannot be free.

Self-esteem. Self-esteem, in general, is a fundamental aspect of an individual’s personal integrity and development. Branden (1983) indicated that self-esteem is a concept pertaining to a fundamental sense of efficacy and a fundamental sense of worth that results in a sense of competence and worthiness in life. From infancy, individuals are affected by others’ attitudes towards them, which affect their self-esteem. This concept must be understood because individuals continue to develop as they enter the world of education. Gil and Vazquez (1996) stated that as children begin to move beyond the exclusive mother-infant relationship and individuate, their self-esteem is also affected by other family members. This is significant

because as individuals continue to develop in educational institutions, they are affected by the attitudes of their caretakers, teachers, and administrators at all levels. The subtleties of the external messages are internalized, thus affecting the individual's self-esteem profoundly.

In a triple study, researchers Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, and McCoy (2007) examined the perceptions related to discrimination experienced by Latin American students. They looked at how their worldviews influenced them and how their perception of discrimination affected their self-esteem between "devalued groups." In their three studies on discrimination, worldview threat, and self-esteem at UC Santa Barbara, they tested the worldview verification theory of responses of discrimination. They examined whether the belief of meritocracy ideology (MI) resulted in changes in self-esteem and inner-group blame as a reaction to perceived discrimination. In the first study, the researchers focused on whether MI was legitimated when *Latin American* undergraduates experienced perceived discrimination. The researchers further administered questionnaires to 191 self-identified *Latin American* undergraduate students who matriculated at a four-year university and enrolled in an introductory psychology class. Of those participants, 70% were females with a mean age of 18.6 years. The results revealed that, because of the variation of worldviews, the relationship between perceived discrimination and personal self-esteem differed: Latinos who adopted MI and perceived more discrimination against them had lower self esteem. Based on the results of how the participants responded, those who rejected MI had higher self-esteem.

For the second study, Major et al. (2007) selected 50 participants from the first study to participate. The participants were randomly selected to read and analyze an article that contained prejudice against either another ethnic group or their own group. The researchers utilized this approach to demonstrate that, through manipulation of an experience, students who

adopt MI have lower self-esteem and those who reject it have higher self-esteem. According to Major et al., the results revealed participants were affected more when the prejudice was against their own ethnic group, which resulted in lower self-esteem. Participants had higher self-esteem when the prejudice was against another ethnic group. Therefore, the researchers concluded that, when discrimination is perceived, individuals are prepared to modify their perceptions in order to defend their worldviews. They also, in a related finding, found that Chicanos/Latinos who rejected MI blamed Latinos less for their lack of advancement in society, while those who adopted MI blamed the in-group. In this study, 82% of the participants were females with a mean age of 18.6 years.

In the third study, Major et al. (2007) attempted to prove a stronger worldview model. Latin American women were randomly selected to participate and read one of two articles: either one that identified and focused on discrimination against women, or one that identified rare occurrences of discrimination against women, minimizing the phenomenon. In this study, 58 undergraduate females were selected to participate. The results revealed that the effects of perceived discrimination on self-esteem varied. Participants who read the article in which discrimination against women was identified and who had adopted MI had decreased self-esteem. Those who rejected MI and also read the same article had higher self-esteem. Furthermore, women who adopted MI were more likely to blame women for their misfortune in society, regardless of which article they read. Those who rejected MI were less likely to blame women, regardless of which article they read.

This is a study that fundamentally illustrates the correlations among and simultaneous effects of external factors, internal factors, and *el choque*. In summary, these three studies revealed that, when individuals perceive discrimination against their ethnic group, their

worldviews are threatened. They tend to blame the dominant culture for their misfortunes within society because they believe that their societal status is earned, this in turn lessens their self-esteem. However, those with higher self-esteem blame the ethnic group for their misfortunes. Overall, self-esteem plays a great part in every aspect of an individual's life. These studies of the effects of perceived discrimination on self-esteem, according to Major et al. (2007), showed "the relationship between society's evaluation of one's social identity and one's own evaluation of oneself" (p.1084).

MI is a double-edged sword for disadvantaged groups: It is a societal belief that, in a merit-based system, individuals can advance based on hard work and talent. Because of this perspective, individuals may examine their own worlds but may become more threatened when they realize that their worldviews are false. When individuals reject MI, they must be aware of the pros and cons involved. Major et al. (2007) noted that when MI is rejected, the pain of discrimination is reduced; when individuals who have rejected MI confront discrimination, they tend to disengage in ways that are healthier for their self-esteem.

Researchers have concluded that self-esteem is a critical component of one's transformation. Hurtado and Gurin (2004) stated that individuals who feel self-efficacy are also likely to perceive several courses of action for solving a problem, to increase their efforts in given endeavors, to have "resilience in the face of adverse conditions, and to experience less stress and depression in the face of failure" (p. 83). Branden (1983) further noted that self-esteem is the ultimate ground of consciousness and, as such, grounds all experience. This is the single most important thing to be understood about the role of self-esteem in human psychology (p. 13).

Gil and Vasquez (1996) agreed that, without a doubt, taking care of oneself is the best antidote available for depleted self-worth. Anzaldúa (1987) declared that, by creating a new mythos (i.e., a change in the way one perceives reality, the way one sees oneself), *la mestiza* [a person of mixed race] will create a new consciousness and find the third space of *Nepantlá*. *Nepantlá* is the discovery of the individuals' identity, and where their cultures intersect. Sometimes it clashes with the dominant culture. *Nepantlá* is a unique space where change can occur, thus helping to build a positive self-esteem. Branden (1983) added that the first act of honoring self is the assertion of consciousness: the choice to think, to be aware, to send the searchlight of consciousness both outward toward the world, and inward toward one's own being. To honor the self is to be committed to the right to exist.

Chicana/Latina internal struggles. According to Anzaldúa (1999), Chicana/Latina females are oppressed by their own culture specifically when they are reminded of the importance of family relations and the expectation that they are to subordinate to family needs. There is a clash of individual needs versus community and family needs, whereby Chicanas/Latinas are reminded that they have a place within the culture based on the order of tradition. This notion of serving others results in the perpetuation of the cycle of self-oppression. Since the Chicana/Latina is conditioned to serve her community, she loses her sense of self-worth:

The ambivalence from the clash of voices results in mental and emotional states of perplexity. Internal strife results in insecurity and indecisiveness. The mestiza's dual or multiple personality is plagued by psychic restlessness. (p. 78)

The Chicana/Latina's mind is thus restless and confused. The Chicana/Latina experiences what Anzaldúa (1987) calls "*el choque*" [collision] because she is stuck between two cultures and not allowed to be herself. The experience of *el choque* produces internal

conflict, self-doubt, and low-self esteem, all of which lead to the Chicana/Latina inflicting pain and becoming the oppressor as well as the oppressed.

Rendon (1996) noted Chicana/Latina students come to community college having had “one or more unconfirming experiences” (p. 294) that resulted in them doubting their academic ability. Rendon and Garza (1996) asserted that Chicanas/Latinas doubt both their place in the institution and their intellectual capacity. The subtle messages communicated in education reinforce the doubt within the student. The researchers added that for example, Chicanas/Latinas have heard loud and clear the following messages that, “only white men can do science and math that only the best and brightest deserve to be educated” (p. 285). Rendon (1994) also argued that, due not only to external racism, but also to the internalization of its messages, involvement in higher education for such students is not easy. The use of Validation Theory may be the prerequisite for involvement to occur; however, it is difficult for Chicanas/Latinas to become involved because they are expected to follow their traditional culture’s order, and order which places them last. Likewise, hooks (2003a) explained that Black women are also socialized to assume the role of omnipotent caregiver, which results in co-dependent behavior. Anzaldúa (1987) mentioned that Chicano/Latino culture is focused on collective values; the welfare of the family and the community are more important than the welfare of the female individual.

Unlike Anzaldúa Gil and Vazquez (1996) did not see the full dimensions of *el choque*. They ignored the role of culture and its effects on the individual’s self-esteem, stressing that conflicts frequently are sharpened and intensified when an individual tries to live in two cultural worlds at once, but further elaborating that it is natural that a Chicana/Latina, newly exposed to different cultural views through television, school, work, or her *amigas* [friends], will begin to doubt herself. Because this woman may never before have experienced such self-doubt, she may

feel alienated as a consequence. Along with this feeling of alienation is a constant sense of worthlessness and sadness, and an internal dialogue. While their work acknowledged the fact of a cultural collision, they did not recognize the extent of its effects or its unique positioning in the self-identification of Chicano/Latino and Chicana/Latina students.

According to Branden (1983), the internal dialogue that individuals develop carries oppression beyond the external environment. None is as important as the judgment of oneself because that judgment is at the very center of one's existence. No significant aspect of one's thinking, motivation, feeling or behavior is unaffected by self-evaluation. Beneath the external demands, there is still the internal dialogue of opinion, with its effects on one's self-worth and the core of one's soul. Gil and Vasquez (1996) believed that sometimes the pressures are not caused by external reactions, but rather result from inner values that play a role in one's opinion of self, which can also result in confusion and psychic discomfort. The discomforts of self-doubt are perpetuated through experiences stored in memory, becoming impediments to the development of a healthy sense of personal identity.

In addition, the development of self is affected by various social influences, particularly socialization of the student by the family, schools and the community. Orozco (2003) affirmed that her failure in some of her courses affected her emotional state: "as a result of trying to manage my family and school demands, I was unmotivated and I very much disliked my situation" (p. 132). Within these social contexts, individuals develop their sense of who they are. Levin (1998) further asserted that one cannot separate school from life. Yet, despite the lack of supplies, funding, and the many other barriers, when students are provided different avenues to learn, they become more inquisitive learners. Therefore, connecting education with a greater awareness of social injustice is important. Hurtado and Gurin (2004) provided an example of

one particular young woman, who “sees herself as smart, but unappreciated, by some of her teachers; as a risk taker who goes away to graduate school, and as a survivor” (p. xvi).

hooks (2003a) believed that recovery becomes the path upon which women begin to understand the many aspects of their sickness and healing. She insisted that co-dependency be looked at critically. Furthermore, women must become part of the healing process when, in search of their transformation, they become conscious of their capacity to enable others. To recover, one must encounter the darkness. However, doing so is feared and denied because of the emotional pain that one must experience in the process. hooks concluded that to recover and regain ones’ self-esteem, it is imperative to first love oneself. Anzaldúa (1987) added that there is an inner struggle played out in the outer sphere where the Chicana/Latina battles with her own opinions about herself and self-evaluations she has been taught by her own culture. Only when individuals learn to look within the self, will they be able to make changes in their outer world. This is what Anzaldúa called the third space of *Nepantlá*, where the external societal messages are internalized and taken in by Chicanos/Latinos creating what Anzaldúa (1987) calls “*el choque*” [collision]:

El choque de un alma atrapado entre el mundo del espíritu y el mundo de la técnica a veces la deja entullada. Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, la mestiza undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war. Like all people we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes un choque, a cultural collision. (p. 78)

The cultural collision is followed by a destruction of illusions in which the demoralized being goes into shock because of the misperception of the cultural reality leading to internal conflict. Anzaldúa (1987) added that Chicanos/Latinos could remedy their internal conflict by searching for the third space called *Nepantlá* (p.79). *Nepantlá* as discussed above, is where the

individual discovers where their identity and cultures intersect, or sometimes clashes, with the dominant culture – this is the unique space whereby change can occur for Chicano/Latino students.

Finding Nepantlá. In Nahuatl (Aztec language) the term *Nepantlá* means being in between or in the middle space. *Nepantlá* is the embodiment of ambiguity of our mestizaje [Mestizo- a person of mixed race], a place where the internal borderlands within us collide, creating a cultural collision (Anzaldúa 1987). This collision represents chaos and tension in the physical world. *Nepantlá* is the encounter of multiple divergent worldviews also known as transculturation. *Nepantlá* is the between state of traveling from the present identity into a new identity. *Nepantlá* is a way of preserving one's culture while encountering other cultures. *Nepantlá* embodies both inherited and disinherited traditions of thought and knowledge: a place of resisting the mainstream and reinterpreting and redefining cultural difference as a place of power while reclaiming indigenous ancestral practices (Mora, 2008). Once the tensions of *Nepantlá* are understood and confronted, the native self is recovered and continuously healed. *Nepantlá* is the place where marginalized populations transform and liberate themselves. *Nepantlá* becomes the space where Chicanos/Latinos make psychological, spiritual, and political meaning. Chicanos/Latinos become change agents whereby deciding what works for their culture, negating limited thinking and confusion. They travel through their inner borderlands and consciously make choices about what nurtures their mestizaje. As a result, they return to a core that is cradled by their soul and spirit, where they can reclaim their inherited power to make decisions for oneself. *Nepantlá* is referenced as a term whereby endangered people, cultures, and or genders engage in resistance strategies of survival due to invasion, conquest, marginalization, or forced acculturation. *Nepantlá* becomes the larger cultural spaces where

psychological congruency happens. The new middle becomes the postmodern paradigm or consciousness rooted in creativity of *Nepantlá*. Its intent is to heal from the open wounds of colonial occupation. Fundamentally, *Nepantlá* is the process of developing political, cultural and psychological consciousness as a means of survival. It requires initiative to access this space, however. Thus, Chicanos/Latinos should take matters into their own hands.

Conclusion/Summary for Literature Review

In summary, this literature review has discussed the multiple factors and injustices that Chicanos/Latinos have confronted and continue to face today. The factors are: 1) historical, 2) social, 3) political, and 4) economic inequities that serve as barriers to their success in life. For many years, research studies have demonstrated the need for institutional structural change to no avail. Chicanos/Latinos are still affected by the external factors of history, the Black and White binary, the lack of academic achievement necessary to enter four-year universities and the lack of institutional accountability. Chicanos/Latinos are the largest minority group nationwide, and yet continue to be the least integrated within the education system and society. Hayes-Bautista, (2004) claimed that historically Chicanos/Latinos have been transparent and have “simply disappeared” (p. 31). Researchers argued that the solution must extend beyond the identification of the problem.

As the leading ethnic majority population, and after over 40 years of educational reform, Chicanos/Latinos are still underrepresented, underserved, underprepared and undereducated. When it comes to educational attainment, Gándara and Contreras (2009) and Kever (2009) claimed that historically progress has been very slow. Chicanos/Latinos are dropping out as early as middle school. The authors noted that if dropouts are caught early on they can still become productive contributors to the economy and society. They noted that when

Chicano/Latino students fall through the cracks, it is their communities but also the states that house them that are most affected. Those who are under-prepared or dropout of school and wish to continue their education and will end up at the community colleges instead of four-year universities.

The stated purpose of community college was to provide access to the underserved, under-prepared and undereducated. But as more Chicanos/Latinos return to college to use this resource as it was intended, they face other factors of inequities such as lack of resources, limited access to counselors, and lack of role models. Moreover, Chicano/Latino students already come to college having undergone layers of internalized experiences: adaptation to a new environment/culture, gender roles, internalized oppression and lack of self-esteem. These factors affect their academic success. Many of them also lack the support from both family and the school personnel, a lack which can greatly impede their academic advancement. Through various studies within the literature review, researchers noted that programs that are sensitive to Chicano/Latino students' needs and that encourage preparation for four-year universities need to be incorporated as early as elementary school. They added that counselors can serve as conduits to the academic success of Chicano/Latino students. Rendon (2002) specified that, in order to best serve the Chicano/Latino student population, counselors need to have a different approach focused on Validation Theory.

In conclusion, the education of Chicanos/Latinos plays a great part in today's economy and society. If the United States wants to continue to be the leading world force, change must look and be different. The historical approach of one-size-fits-all and the patchwork remedies no longer work to improve the inequities and injustices Chicanos/Latinos experience. The problem is not isolated to one area or state; it is a societal issue that needs to be confronted. Gándara and

Contreras (2009) claimed that the education of Chicanos/Latinos has gone beyond a crisis, and that as a country, we are facing “both a regional and national catastrophe” (p. 5). Anzaldúa (1987) suggested that it is more important to empower people to make the inner change while bringing to light the inner turmoil of the silenced internal borderlands that individuals live with. Finding *Nepantla* is that middle space where change is created through a deeper understanding of oneself. Moreover, it is not only understanding oneself but taking action to name the worlds they live in, creating environments where they can heal and be free from oppression in efforts to create a better tomorrow for humanity. In finding *Nepantla* Chicanos/Latinos can reclaim their identity, integrity, and spirit to bring about invaluable change in society.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Problem

A number of researchers including Gándara and Contreras (2009), Kever (2009), Fry (2002), Valencia (2002), Valenzuela (2000), and Yosso (2006) have documented that the increased dropout rate of Chicano/Latino students in K-12 is affecting society as a whole. If Chicano/Latino students who drop out of school choose to return at a later time they will end up in the community college system. On the other hand, those that do not return to college are faced with being unskilled, unemployed, incarcerated and living in poverty. Considering the increased changes in California's demographics, more Chicano/Latino students are returning to community college to obtain an education, yet barriers still exist and fewer are transferring to four-year universities. However, the retention and success rates of those Chicano/Latino students attending community college have not been accurately validated in research studies. Researchers Castellanos and Jones (2003), Darder, Torres, and Gutierrez (1997), Fry (2002), and Gándara and Contreras (2009) have argued that the social disparities in education will not go away until a deconstruction of the racism inherent in the common practices of academia occurs. Such a deconstruction would finally force educational institutions to address the needs of the diverse communities they serve.

Research Questions

This research addressed the following questions.

Research Question 1:

What external factors do Chicano/Latino students perceive as determinants of academic success/failure?

Research Question 2:

What internal factors do Chicano/Latino students perceive as determinants of academic success/failure?

Research Question 3:

What motivates Chicano/Latino students to succeed?

Research Design

Participatory Action Research (PAR) was selected as a research design for this project because of its emphasis on social justice and the political charge to work with impoverished communities that are oppressed and powerless in the structures of modern society (Park, 1989). In addition, Maguire's (1987) in-depth critique which outlined how to counter the "positivist and the dominant androcentric paradigm underpinnings" (p. 105) so often found in research models and hierarchies of method was applied. In positivist theories, one assumes the empirical methods of the hard sciences, such as physics, are the only valid ways to gain knowledge of the human condition. Supporting Maguire, Ada and Beutal (1993), Collins (2000), Freire (2000) and Maguire (1987) have all agreed that through the process of the community "naming their world," the oppressed find and make meaning, thereby liberating the oppressed from the oppressor. The research design for this project is in line with Maguire's critique of positivism and with the findings of these researchers mentioned above.

According to Ada and Beutal (1993), Freire (2000), Kieffer (1981), and Magurie (1987), the oppressed are the true researchers because of their experience. Park (1989) noted that "it is the ordinary folk with problems to solve who form a partnership with the researcher, to learn about the dimensions of oppression, the structural contradictions, and transformative potentials

open to collective action” (p. 3). Researchers in this process are not separate from the community. These values are reflected in participatory research:

The researcher participates in the struggle of the people. This is the other side of participation in this kind of work. He or she becomes a member of the research team with a specific role to play. The researcher works with the community to help turn its felt but unarticulated problem into an identifiable topic of collective investigation (Park et al. 1993, p. 9).

Further, Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, and Jackson (1993) noted that the researcher does not operate alone but serves as an agent for change alongside the oppressed community. In a PAR project, the researcher and the co-researchers together are considered the conduits of change, acting jointly to find tangible solutions for the community.

According to Ada and Beutal (1993), participatory researchers strive to operate with a deep commitment to transformative dialogue and action, seeking the knowledge of the community in their efforts to empower its members. They affirmed that participatory research is more than a method, noting that the intent of the participatory researcher is:

To transform the world. To amplify the voices of those who are rendered voiceless by the dominant society. To inscribe with them their words and wisdom, creating written histories, and then to read the world with one another. To provide the stage where women and men, children, the elderly, and the disenfranchised minorities and communities become the protagonists in their own life stories. (p. 7)

Park et al. (1993), Kieffer (1981), Maguire (1987), and Park (1989) claimed that participatory research is unique because it prizes distinctive factors of dialogue, empowerment, and action. By engaging in dialogue, co-researchers begin “digging up the necessary layers that are buried” where “structured atrophied community relations and silence” overwhelm the possibility of action (Park et al. 1993, p. 17). Kieffer (1981) asserted that by participating in this process of dialogue, individuals become empowered. Additionally, Park (1989) noted that empowerment happens when the oppressed engage in collective social action. With the contributions of Kieffer

and Park in mind, we see that through the collective process of dialogue individuals are re-humanized and are able to “achieve emancipation through collective action” (Ada and Beutal, 1989, p. 7).

Freire (2000), Park et al. (1993), Maguire (1987), and Park (1989) have contended that participatory research is uniquely useful in that it acknowledges the knowledge base of a community resulting in vital collaboration between researchers and co-researchers and often providing co-researchers with the opportunities to produce tools to face the fears in their own communities. Park et al. (1993) concluded that “participatory research fundamentally is about the right to speak” (p. xvii). Freire (2000) argued that one must be willing to name the world in which one lives in order to transform it. Further, Freire (1996) asserted that, “silence does not signify an absence of response, but rather a response which lacks a critical quality” (p. 24).

Consequently, he noted that dialogues are combinations of reflection and action that assist in reclaiming personal history. He affirmed the need for dialogue to support authentic transformation. Freire (1996) further elaborated that through PAR “education is a practice of freedom” where educators serve as liberators and not as oppressors (p. vii). Similarly, Darder (1997) defined voice in the following terms:

The bicultural voice points to a discourse that not only incorporates the world views, histories and lived experiences of subordinate cultural groups in the United States, but also functions to rupture the historical and institutionalized silence of students of color and the beliefs and practices that support such dehumanizing forms of discourse through their active intersection and dialogue with one another, they come to develop a consciousness. (p. 40)

Darder (1997) further noted five elements that are incorporated in the development of voice: 1) critical reflection upon the collective experience of peoples’ cultures and their own individual interaction with mainstream institutions; 2) affirmation of the knowledge they possess as a group and as individuals; 3) recognition of their position, or the status of their group, in society; 4)

resistance to domination by challenging explicitly the implicit mechanisms of cultural insubordination that dehumanize and disempower students; and 5), entrance into relationships of solidarity as equal partners. Darder's approach enhances and clarifies how voice is developed. In PAR, there is a clear focus on collective community building, and an imperative to stand together and fight as the participants' voices emerge from the struggle.

Maguire (1987) elaborated that PAR is a course of action combining three activities: investigation, education, and action, which are not merely intended "to describe and interpret social reality, but to radically change it" (p. 28). In investigation, the oppressed must participate to identify the problems as well as assist in finding the solutions. The educational process occurs when the researcher and co-researchers collaborate as a team and further discuss issues that emerge during the process. Based on the investigation and education, the co-researchers, supported by the researcher, then developed a plan to take action for change. The development of voice occurs as the researcher and co-researchers experience the PAR process through these three activities and collectively create and implement community change.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of Chicano/Latino community college students in relation to the external and internal factors that support and/or impede their academic success along with understanding what motivates them to succeed. In this study, the researcher attempted to bring voice to Chicano/Latino students' educational experiences using the elements of PAR discussed above. Freire (1993) stated that it is through the dialogue process that "the silenced are not just incidental to the curiosity of the researcher, but are the masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of the events in the world" (p. "Forward"). Within the process the co-researchers share their collective knowledge, dispelling the deficit thinking approach in the education system. Through PAR, the co-researchers are seen as assets to their communities.

Ultimately, the methodology of PAR required the co-researchers to be involved in an action process to change their situations, to address unspoken or unmet needs in their communities, and empower future generations of Chicano/Latino students.

Co-researchers

In this study the researcher selected eight students from the Puente Program at Chabot Community College. The co-researchers self-identified ethnically as Chicano/Latino at the time of their matriculation.

Characteristics of Individual Co-researchers

In this study, the self-perceptions of Chicano/Latino students in a community college were considered as a window into understanding the complexity of their educational experiences. The students were encouraged to create alternative names to protect their identity. They were also allowed to provide a brief description of their characteristics and identities defined by each co-researcher as a way to develop their own voice. This description was to include a snapshot of each co-researcher's experience of the education system.

Selection Process

A list of students was obtained from the Puente Program Counselor. The researcher also requested a ten minute time slot to present in the Counselor's class and invite students to participate in the study. A recruitment letter (Appendix C) was then mailed out to the students of the Puente Program. Upon the receipt of student responses a second letter was sent as a confirmation of the student's participation in the study.

Students willing to participate were asked to contact the researcher via telephone or e-mail. Based on the responses, five females and three males who identified as Chicano/Latino

were selected to participate in the study. These eight students then met with the researcher for an informational meeting during which they were again informed of the purpose of the study.

Chabot Community College. Chabot Community College is located in Hayward, California (in Northern California). It was founded in 1961 as a transfer institution to prepare students for admission to four-year colleges and universities. According to the Community College Institutional Research Dataset spring semester census, Latinos are the largest ethnic minority at Chabot Community College (Retrieved September 10, 2008 <http://raicescollege.edu/IR/studentcharacteristics/>). In less than a year's time the Latino student population increased 2%. Chabot Community College serves a rough total of 15,000 students; at the time of this study, 3,889 of these students were Latino, equaling 26%, and making the college a Hispanic Serving Institute (HSI). 3,157 of the students are White, equaling 21% (Retrieved on February 10, 2010 <http://www.chabotcollege.edu/accreditation/documents/2009-Accreditation-Report.pdf>). Chabot Community College is located in an urban area with a total population of 140,000. The surrounding K-12 public education system consists of 34 schools (25 elementary schools, five middle schools and four high schools) and has an approximate enrollment of 24,000 students.

Puente Program. Puente is a retention program, founded in 1981, at Chabot College for students who plan to transfer to either the CSU or UC system. The mission of Puente is to increase the number of Chicano/Latino students who transfer to four-year universities (Puente Project Community College Program and Implementation Guidelines, 2008). Puente has been adopted by other institutions and is currently operating in "62 community colleges and 35 high schools" (p. 1).

The Puente Program has become the standard for such projects and has been adopted as a state model. The program includes the alignment of counseling, instruction and community mentor, in an attempt to provide students with a seamless support structure. At Chabot Community College, the counselor from Student Services and an instructor co-coordinate the program and are involved in all aspects of program development and implementation.

The Puente Program is a two-semester program in which the counselor assists students in system navigation and preparation. The Puente Program serves two cohorts of 25 students per cohort; a total of 50 students are served a year. The program attempts to provide equal access to all students interested in participating. The Puente Program has served students from diverse backgrounds: Guamanian, Hawaiian, Filipino, Pacific Islander, African American, Anglos, and Latinos from Central America, South America, Puerto Rico, and Mexico. The community mentor offers insight and encouragement on career development. The connection formed with the community mentor further encourages students to pursue their academic goals. The mentors serve as role models and community leaders.

Instrumentation

The selected eight co-researchers, five females and three males, participated in a Participatory Action Research Project. Co-researchers' feedback was essential in the process of gathering data, their roles as co-researchers in the collaborative processes of dialogue and participatory research were defined. The instrumentation of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) Five-Phase Group Process was implemented with the co-researchers who attended a total of twelve meetings: an initial one-hour preliminary meeting, five group sessions, and a final one-hour closure meeting. The co-researchers were introduced to the PAR process at our one-hour

preliminary information meeting. They then took part in a total of five sets of two two-hour group dialogues, which included:

- Phase I: two two-hour group processes to identify the problem
- Phase II: two two-hour group processes to code and analyze the generative theme at a deeper level
- Phase III: two two-hour group processes to connect student interpretations to societal issues
- Phase IV: two two-hour group processes to do a collective analysis
- Phase V: two two-hour group processes to develop an action plan.

The PAR process ended with a one-hour closure meeting to reflect on the completed process.

Table 1.

PAR Five-Phase process Meeting Schedule

Preliminary	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV	Phase V	Closure Mtg.
Mtg. 1 1 hour	Mtg. 2 2 hours	Mtg. 4 2 hours	Mtg. 6 2 hours	Mtg. 8 2 hours	Mtg. 10 2 hours	Mtg. 12 1 hour
	Mtg. 3 2 hours	Mtg. 5 2 hours	Mtg. 7 2 hours	Mtg. 9 2 hours	Mtg. 11 2 hours	
1	4	4	4	4	4	1

Within the PAR five-phase process the co-researchers met for a total of twenty-two hours.

Preliminary Information Meeting

The co-researchers met with me at a neutral location at a Café across the street from their college on a Saturday morning. At the information meeting, we reviewed the purpose of the study. Forms of confidentiality, student rights, and consents were signed. They also completed

a demographic form that provided additional information about their history. The Puente Project counselor also attended to show his support for the students who were participating in the study.

The co-researchers were asked to introduce themselves and select pseudonyms in order to protect their identity. I provided a packet outlining the purpose of the study and information on the methodology being used for the study. The co-researchers were encouraged to review, discuss and to ask questions about anything that was unclear. They were also asked to research the data on Chicano/Latino students at Chabot College and the Puente Project. In addition, they were asked to reflect on what they saw as the problems in education and to come next week prepared to discuss their viewpoints. At the end of the meeting, the group discussed where we would have the next meeting. Zapata offered his house for more privacy and community building.

Validity

Beyond the instrumental knowledge to be gained in this research, the greater value comes from Park et al. (1993) as he states:

For interactive knowledge the claim to validity is to be redeemed in producing communal relations that are characterized by understanding in the broad sense of empathy and connectedness. And finally, critical knowledge validates itself in creating a vehicle of transformation and in overcoming obstacles to emancipation—both internally and with respect to the external world. (p. 16)

Similarly, Fine (2007) asserted that through constructing validity in PAR, the researcher and the co-researchers pursue a deeper analysis. Together, they “deliberately refuse neutrality” (p. 214). Fine (2007) further explained that PAR is a “radical epistemological challenge to traditions of social science” (p. 215). PAR seeks the knowledge of those that have been excluded from the structures in question. In construct validity, one allows healing to take place by providing insight to those who are excluded and constantly marginalized in society. Maguire

(1987) added that PAR serves to benefit the individuals and community oppressed by allowing a healing to take place from the process. Fine (2007) noted that this process works because researchers are collectively allowed to “rename constructs, restore integrity to self, refuse shame and return the analytic and political gaze back on inadequate educational systems” (p. 225). Therefore, the validity comes from the students’ successful involvement in a process that gives them functional insight into, and practical way of dealing with, their exclusion from the education system. Fine noted that through PAR the researchers become, “active, engaged and questioning co-researchers” in the process of change (p. 226). For Maguire (1987) individual empowerment is more important than science where the liberation of an oppressed community is most important in the research. Therefore, the validity of a PAR research model comes from the co-researchers’ successful involvement: in this case, the students’ successful involvement in a process in which they receive functional insight into their exclusion from the educational system and learn practical ways of dealing with oppression.

Reliability

According to Fine (2007) the reliability of PAR comes from the co-researchers being individuals who have lived the experiences that have been silenced and not shared. Therefore, the researcher must confirm that the co-researchers are indeed a marginalized or oppressed community. The reliability of PAR research is important because through the process, the co-researchers’ experiences are validated. The reliability standards are set and met by this methodology and the project. Reliability is dependent on the consistency and dependability of the research findings in general. Reliability is established in PAR through the group process. Through the five phases of PAR, the group is able to achieve the various levels of validity, credibility and reliability by serving as critical support within the process. The group dialogues

offer insight concerning what extent the conclusions match the evidence. This process establishes a consistency of flow, and after the process, the dialogue and reflexive analysis is constant. Furthermore, through PAR, the researcher is able to take a more in-depth look to challenge the evidence to make sure that the co-researchers' claims made are adequately covered and authenticated. Reliability is also verified by double-checking the work in order to verify that the analysis remains grounded in data. More importantly, when variables can be observed or measured from different vantage points – that of the researcher and those of the co-researchers – the researcher is able to convince the audience that the conclusions are valid, establishing the reliability and validity of the study.

Setting

To assist in the comfort level of the co-researchers, the researcher allowed the co-researchers to select the location where we would together experience the PAR five-phase process. The co-researchers chose a location most comfortable for them. By entering into the co-researchers' world, the researcher learned more about the Chicano/Latino students' daily experiences within the education system, home, and society.

Data Collection

The co-researchers were asked to commit to a five-phase process (as introduced under “instrumentation”). The preliminary phase entailed a one-hour information meeting to review the purpose of the study and of each of the five-phases of participatory action research. The five-phases as presented to the co-researchers included Phase I: identifying the problem, Phase II: generative themes, Phase III: societal issues, Phase IV: collective analysis, and Phase V: action plan. Relevant documents were distributed to the co-researchers to give them further information about the study and obtain their consent. Please see Appendices C, D, E, F and G.

Finally, the co-researchers reviewed and learned what Participatory Action Research (PAR) is. In addition, they signed and completed necessary forms for their participation in the study. The researcher also discussed with the co-researchers the importance of confidentiality. The co-researchers were encouraged to select pseudonyms to use as names through this process to protect their identity. The researcher further informed the co-researchers that the meetings would be tape-recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions of recorded meetings would be provided to the student co-researchers within two weeks of the group process in order to provide them with the opportunity to make any necessary corrections, additions, and/or deletions. Co-researchers were reminded that they could inquire anytime with concerns or questions that they had about the study.

Phase I: Identifying the Problem. Phase I involved two two-hour group sessions of reflective dialogue to identify the problem that would be focused on by the research team (using research questions 1 and 2 as a base). The subjects were asked to reflect upon the internal and external factors that supported and/or impeded their academic success. The goal of the group dialogues was to empower the co-researchers to develop their own voices in order to break the silence. Toward this end, the co-researchers were encouraged to ask questions and provide insights that were not asked by the researcher. At the end of Phase I, the next meeting was determined for Phase II. The researcher then transcribed the audio tapes and sent a typed transcript to each co-researcher with a self-addressed envelope within two weeks. The co-researchers were to review the transcript make the necessary revisions and return the corrected transcript to the researcher. The researcher was to then edit the recommendations and develop questions to clarify any unanswered questions as preparation for Phase II.

Phase II: Generative Themes. Phase II also consisted of two two-hour group sessions that were organized to code and analyze the generative themes that emerged. The co-researchers were encouraged to ask questions. Collectively the researcher and co-researchers coded and analyzed the data collected. The researcher used the questions created from Phase I to continue the reflective dialogues. This process was to serve to stimulate deeper critical thinking of the external and internal factors that supported and/or impeded the co-researcher's academic success. At the end of Phase II the researcher confirmed the next meeting for Phase III. The researcher then transcribed each audio tape and sent a typed transcript to the co-researcher with a self-addressed envelope within two weeks. The co-researchers were to review the transcript make the necessary revisions and return it to the researcher.

Phase III: Societal Issues. Phase III was comprised of two two-hour group sessions as well. They were organized to impart skills that assisted the co-researchers in investigating their own realities and in connecting their interpretations to societal issues. The researcher, along with the co-researchers continued to code and analyze the emerging themes from Phase II and III. At the end of Phase III, the researcher confirmed the next meeting for Phase IV. The researcher then transcribed each audio tape and sent a typed transcript to the co-researchers with a self-addressed envelope within two weeks. As with Phase II, the co-researchers were to review the transcript, make the necessary revisions, and return it to the researcher.

Phase IV: Collective Analysis. Phase IV was two two-hour group sessions where the researcher and co-researchers completed a collective analysis of the data collected. At the end of Phase IV the researcher confirmed the next meeting for Phase V. The researcher then transcribed each audio tape and sent a typed transcript to the co-researchers with a self-addressed

envelope within two weeks. The co-researchers were to review the transcript, make the necessary revisions, and return it to the researcher.

Phase V: Action Plan. Phase V was two two-hour action planning group sessions whereby the researcher and co-researchers jointly determined the next steps to implement change. At the end of Phase V, the researcher confirmed the date for the final closure meeting. The researcher then transcribed each audio tape and sent a typed transcript to the co-researchers with a self-addressed envelope within two weeks. The co-researchers were to review the transcript, make necessary revisions, and return it to the researcher. In addition, there was a final review within the group process in order to confirm the revisions. The final meeting was a one-hour closure group process where the researcher and co-researchers revisited the whole group experience of the PAR process. We further discussed when the team would present on the findings to the administrative team of Chabot Community College and the Puente Program Leadership.

Data Analysis

Ada and Beutal (1993) asserted that in the process of participatory research, the researcher initiates the analysis of “constructing knowledge” (p. 13). In efforts to construct knowledge, the perceptions of Chicano/Latino students were analyzed through PAR. Specifically, Maguire’s (1987) five-phase method that the co-researchers underwent served a number of purposes toward this end:

- Phase I entailed a synthesis of the issues the co-researchers were facing, indicated by information collected and analyzed. The researcher analyzed the collected data to discover common themes and coded them.

- Phase II involved a deeper analysis of the generated themes that brought the researcher and co-researchers closer to understanding their perceptions of the issues they experienced in the education system.
- Phase III served to connect the broader issues of society to the co-researchers' interpretations.
- Phase IV included the collective analyses of information gathered concerning the social realities.
- Phase V involved a collective dialogue in support of the use of research and action to benefit those involved.

Once the data was gathered, a transcription was typed and disseminated to the co-researchers. Individually, the co-researchers analyzed the transcription. They utilized different color highlighters to distinguish the different themes that they felt were important. They were also encouraged to write notes on the side margins if desired. At the second meeting, a collective group analysis was performed to incorporate thoughts, agree on results and implement the final action plan for community change. The guide attempted to further analyze the qualitative data by quantifying the number of times certain statements were repeated by the co-researchers in the transcript. The co-researchers were always asked to confirm the presented outcomes in efforts to substantiate the reliability and validity of the study through PAR.

Protection of Human Subjects

In an effort to protect the co-researchers involved in this research, this researcher has requested permission from officials of both Chabot Community College (Appendix A) and the University of San Francisco to complete the research. A copy of the letter of endorsement for this research study from the Dean of Instruction has been placed in (Appendix B). In addition,

an application for the Protection of Human Subjects has been submitted with the letters of permission from Chabot Community College. A copy of the Protection of the Human Subjects approval has also been placed as (Appendix H). All the co-researchers were informed regarding the nature of the study and its practical application in education.

The researcher provided the co-researchers with a consent form (Appendix D) they were required to sign to participate in the research study. All co-researchers were informed of their rights (Appendix E). Co-researchers were encouraged to address any concerns and uneasiness they had regarding their participation in the study. They were also reminded that this was a voluntary process and that they were free to withdraw from the process at anytime.

Profile of the Researcher

My desire to research this topic is fueled by my experience in the public school system. I was born in San Francisco, California, and raised in the Mission District. I seize the opportunity to work with students who are labeled as “at risk” of succeeding because failure is not an option. My research is intended to document a reflection of my educational experience and my desire to change my life as well as to be understood as a Chicana/Latina. Those reading this study must remember the importance of finding one’s authentic voice and staying true to one’s spirit. It is my belief that, through my efforts, I will bring validation to other Chicano/Latino students as well.

I have experienced a diseased education system, one that has failed to be inclusive of all the generations of my family. I am the first of 14 children to attend college; none of my 13 siblings have had this opportunity. Seven dropped out of middle or high school, while seven of us graduated. On the other hand, my four children all have graduated from high school and two of the four have continued on the path of higher education. My passion comes from my

experience of living through many crises within this society and my family – crises including poverty, death, suicide, divorce, abuse, and addiction.

During my childhood, my family lived on welfare; my mother, grandmother and 11 children lived in a one-bedroom flat. My parents divorced, exposing me to abuse and other hardships. My mother was killed when I was 14 years old. My sister committed suicide. These problems were magnified by the lack of external support available. Given the difficulties that arose from poverty, lack of schooling, and other misfortunes, I wondered what I could do differently for my family and future generations.

As a first-generation college student, I have come to understand that although my family elders have not received formal educations, their experiences in life helped them survive. I am the fourth of 14 children and the first to complete college. I attended K-12 public schools in the San Francisco Bay Area and graduated one semester late with a 1.5 grade point average. Reflecting upon my high school transcript, I realize that the public school system regarded me merely as a statistic, placing me in classes that did not prepare me for college. Culturally, my parents had trusted that the school system officials had placed me in the right classes. It was hard for my parents to advocate for my siblings and me because of the language barrier and because putting food on the table took priority. They also lacked an understanding of how the education system functioned and how it worked against the children of the disadvantaged.

Unsure of what path I would take after I graduated from high school, I stayed out of school for five years before attending community college. My intention was to better myself and to get out of poverty. Since I started my educational journey in 1984, I have not stopped. With no role models in my immediate family, and my lack of understanding of the education system, I unnecessarily repeated courses, which prolonged my matriculation. It took me eleven years to

complete my Associate's degree in liberal arts at the community college. But once I was focused and more confident, I continued my education and obtained my Bachelor of Science degree from the University of San Francisco in Organizational Behavior and my Master of Science degree from San Francisco State University in Rehabilitation Counseling. I returned to the University of San Francisco for my doctorate degree in education and my process has taken me ten years thus far. Throughout my educational journey, I have been consistently reminded that I lack the skills to complete college. Despite being discouraged, I have persevered against all odds.

My journey through college and graduate school has been difficult in the context of my family, my culture, and educational bureaucracy. I have struggled both between and within the institutions of family and education, starting my educational journey without the complete support of my family. Through these struggles, I was reminded of my role as a Latina and my place in Latino society. I am continually plagued by an internal voice that reminds me of my responsibility of not selling out my community. As Anzaldúa (1987) said in discussing the reality of the cultural collision:

El choque de un alma atrapado entre el mundo del espiritu y el mundo de la tecnica a veces la deja entullada. Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, la mestiza undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war. Like all people we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choque*, a cultural collision (p. 78).

Individuals who are caught in this inner turmoil undergo the cultural collision followed by a destruction of illusions in which the demoralized being goes into shock because of the misperception of the cultural reality that sometimes the individual neither understands nor acculturates into.

Through this research study, I have come to understand the causes of the disadvantages I experienced in my many years within a dysfunctional education system. Not much has changed;

there continues to be an endless lack of accountability for underserved, unrepresented and underprepared students like myself, and role models are almost invisible. My first learning experience with a Chicana/Latina professor was at the graduate level in a master's program. At the doctoral level, I have had courses with two other Latina professors. These experiences prompted me to ask myself and others why it takes so long to see role models like myself and how could I ever have believed that I would make it if I was never taught by anyone who looked like me.

As a Chicana/Latina parent who speaks both English and Spanish, I have had to advocate for my own children. Much like my parents, my own experience was affected by the many life challenges I have faced. As a single parent, working full-time and attending school made it difficult to keep track of the different policies that are utilized to govern the education system.

All four of my children (Shenny, Chante, Jaime and Yessielle) and my three sisters (Luisa and Irene whom I raised and Carmen whom I adopted) attended the public school system in the Bay Area. I noticed the different treatment my children received in the schools they attended. My oldest daughter, Shenny was always tracked in advanced placement (AP) honor classes; my second daughter, Chante was always tracked in college preparatory (CP) classes. However, my younger two always faced more challenges. For example, when they were in second grade, the school administrative team decided to hold my children back. I did some research and provided articles and facts to my children's defense both times – information on the negative ramifications of flunking Chicano/Latino students in terms of their self-esteem and disengagement. As a result of my advocacy, they were able to continue to the next grade.

In high school, my son Jaime was tracked in basic skills classes. He became disengaged with school and was labeled a gang member. The school's administration explained to me that

his dress code, the people with whom he associated, and his pose for a prom picture had led them to believe that he was affiliated with a gang. The vice principal of discipline met with my son because, during the prom, he and his friends had taken a picture that, according to the vice principal, would determine a new path for him. Again, school officials neglected to inform me as a parent of their plan of action. Jaime's poor academic performance had already resulted in him being labeled and placed on the school officials' radar as an at-risk teenager. The administration determined that the so-called gang signs that he had flashed in the prom picture affiliated him to the gang. My son was on the road to being kicked out of high school.

I felt that school officials were racially profiling my son. Although he attended school, he was disengaged from the academic curriculum. His only passions were drama and English. I was angered that the administrators concluded that his lack of motivation warranted kicking him out of school. I argued that he did not have a police record and had never been in a juvenile detention center. One thing that was clear was that Jaime was tracked in basic skills classes. The school officials did allow us to develop a plan of action. As a result, he attended his regular day classes, night school, and summer school. Of course, this placed additional pressure on him to perform, but he persevered and graduated from high school. However, his education in high school did not make him eligible to enter a four-year university.

My fourth child, Yessielle also faced educational challenges. The attempt to hold her back in the second grade was the beginning. In middle school she had completed Algebra 1 in the seventh grade with a B grade; despite this fact, she was placed in Algebra 1 again in the eighth grade. I went to the school to question why she was repeating a class that she had passed. The principal told me to talk to the instructor. When I called him, he informed me that there was no space in his Algebra 2 class and, because she had received a borderline grade on the first quiz,

he decided to have her repeat Algebra 1. I asked him why he had done this without informing me and he stated that “he was the teacher and he knew what was best for my daughter.” He added that if she stayed in his class, he still had the option to fail her. The teacher assumed that I did not know what I was talking about, but his whole demeanor changed when I told him that I was an educator with a master’s degree. I wrote a formal complaint and met with the school principal and district administrator.

Later on, in high school, my daughter Yessielle became disengaged and unmotivated at school. She attended school but, like her brother, was uninterested in the curriculum. She too was labeled at risk because she was not doing her homework. She was kicked out and sent to a continuation high school because she was missing credits. At that school, she got into her first fight. Again, school officials failed to inform me. Instead, they took matters into their own hands. She was searched and questioned. During her questioning, the principal pressured her to admit that she was part of a gang. Her position during the interview was to remain silent.

When Yessielle informed me of the incident I immediately requested a meeting with the principal. I asked why I had not been informed. He stated that, “when they are in school, it is the school officials’ responsibility to take action.” The most disturbing point the principal made was that, because there were gang problems at that school, they had assumed my daughter to be affiliated with a gang. I argued that my daughter was not at that school for behavioral problems, she was there to make up credits. Furthermore, neither did she have a juvenile record nor had she had behavioral problems before. As a result of this gross mis-management of my daughter’s situation, I transferred her to another school district. She was given extra credit for completing her high school (English) exit exam. Yessielle noted that at this new school she was given work

that she had completed in middle school. When I followed up with the school, it was suggested that I meet with the counselor.

Within the first six months at the school, the counselor had been replaced twice. When I met with the counselor she stated that she was new and as Yessielle's mother, I knew more. Angered by the system, I found an alternative for my daughter, the California High School Proficiency Examination. (The counselor did not know about this examination). My daughter took the test twice; on her second try, she passed the math portion and in 2007 she received her High School proficiency certificate. As a result, Yessielle was invited to participate in her continuation high school graduation where she also received her high school diploma in June 2008.

Aside from my own educational experiences, watching my children journey through the education system has truly shattered any vestige of belief I had that the system helps those most in need. I realized that because of the lack of my parents' knowledge of the education system, they could not advocate for my siblings and I. I was fortunately better equipped to do so for my children. Through my educational experience, I was confronted with my own "*choque*" [collision] repeatedly, which challenged me to re-evaluate my middle space of *Nepantlá*. Going beyond my middle space has helped me learn and grow. I am confident that my involvement in this study provided support and validation of the experiences of Chicano/Latino students.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

In this chapter, I include the findings of the co-researchers through the PAR process, which clearly demonstrate that *el choque* is a constant fixture of the Chicano/Latino student's experience. Unconsciously, Chicano/Latino students in the education system are already experiencing *el choque*. We can understand the external factors, the internal factors, and *el choque* as three influences existing simultaneously that define an individual's experience, before he or she moves into *Nepantlá*. This research has identified *el choque* as the product of Chicano/Latino's simultaneous experience of the external and internal factors of their lives as outlined in this chapter. A student's awareness of this transforms *el choque* into the place of empowerment and change whereby the Chicano/Latino student accesses *Nepantlá* and re-defines and re-claims him or herself. This chapter is organized in a way that maps out how the co-researchers moved from *el choque* to *Nepantlá*. We begin with the external factors, move to the internal factors, and then explore the dimensions of *el choque*, before shifting into *Nepantlá*. This path was facilitated through the PAR process, from which data was collected and analyzed by the researcher and co-researchers.

To illustrate the co-researchers' path I include how they enter and begin the PAR process. As stated above, *el choque* in an individual is produced by that individual's experience negotiating the external and internal factors that define his or her life; more specifically, it is produced through the conflict inherent in the cultural collision between these factors. Race and class, as shared dimensions of the co-researchers' experience of *el choque* are common threads throughout this study. Gender disparities, which distinguish female from male experiences of *el*

choque and *Nepantlá*, are also a consistent focus. These threads of race, class, and gender illuminate the collective aspects of the Chicano/Latino experience, in both the spaces of *el choque* and *Nepantlá*. A profile is provided of the cohort to illustrate how the co-researchers enter the PAR process with their own experience of *el choque*.

Puente Project Profile

All the co-researchers were enrolled at Chabot Community College located in Hayward, California. The co-researchers were selected from the counseling class of the Puente Project. Of forty students enrolled in the class, twenty-eight students completed the course. Eight students from the Puente Project self-selected to participate in the study; five females and three males. Table 2 and 3 provides a snapshot of the co-researchers' demographic information and is followed by a detailed personal description that was provided by each co-researcher in the study. Each co-researcher selected a pseudonym to protect his or her identity and to ensure confidentiality. The ages of the co-researchers varied; five of the eight co-researchers were 19 years old, two were 18 years old and one was 23 years old. The co-researchers self identified their ethnicities/races; four identified their ethnicity as Mexican, two as Mexican-American and two as Chicano. The co-researchers also identified their immigrant status; three identified as first generation or born in the United States; three as 'AB 540² or undocumented', one as a legal resident and one as second generation. In addition, seven out of the eight co-researchers identified their socioeconomic status to be lower-middle class and only one reported to be middle class. Aside from economic status, Gándara (1995) noted that a student's success is determined based on the level that the student's mother accomplishes. To support this premise the co-researchers were also asked to list their parents' level of education.

² Two terms are added in this section. The first term AB 540 is defined by how it is utilized in the community college it is used to identify and track undocumented students. The second term 'undocumented' means that the person is a non-citizen living in the U.S. without legal immigration status. These terms will be used interchangeably in this section.

Table 2.

Puente Cohort Demographics

<i>Started</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Dropped out or Pushed out</i>	<i>Participated in the study</i>
40	28	12	8

Table 3.

Co-Researchers Personal Demographic Information

Name	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Immigrant Status	Socioeconomic Status
Zapata	Male	19	Mexican	AB 540	Lower-Middle
Marcos	Male	18	Chicano	1 st Generation	Lower-Middle
Che	Male	19	Chicano	2nd Generation	Lower-Middle
Frida	Female	19	Mexican	AB 540	Lower-Middle
Cuatlicue	Female	23	Mexican	Legal Resident	Middle
Tonantzín	Female	18	Mexican-American	1 st Generation	Lower-Middle
Itzel	Female	19	Mexican	AB 540	Lower-Middle
Esperanza	Female	19	Mexican-American	1 st Generation	Lower-Middle

Personal Profiles at Point of the Co-Researchers' Entry to PAR

In order to keep the student voice present in the study, the co-researchers were asked to write a brief, one-paragraph personal profile that best described them. It was to include their name, age, place of birth, and immigrant status if desired. Only minor editing was performed to increase clarity and consistency. All the statements were authenticated by the co-researchers before publishing.

Zapata. My name is Zapata. I am 19 years old. I am an AB 540 student. I was brought to the United States when I was three years old. I believe that education will be my salvation from poverty. I have faced many challenges in the education system. The challenges include: lack of money, my limited English or language barrier, my lack of knowledge on how to use the

education system, and my undocumented status which creates fear in my life. As an undocumented student I always fear for myself and my family that we can be deported. My undocumented status haunts me in college because I am not able to apply for no financial aid help. I realize that money is a big issue for my parents and my family of six. I will not surrender because I have a responsibility to help other undocumented students like myself.

Marcos. My name is Marcos. I am 18 years old. I was born in California. I am the only male of three siblings. I am the first in my family to attend college. My environment is a place filled with violence and peer pressure. At home my role to be a parent for my younger siblings affects my educational possibilities. Both my parents were born in Mexico. Although my mother attended High school in the United States, my father's lack of education pushes me to continue with my education. Another issue for me as a Chicano male, I have to work and help my family. Also fitting in has been a problem because my father wants me to be like him and I just want to be myself.

Che. My name is Che. I am 19 years old. I was born in Hayward, California. I am the oldest son of five. I have three sisters and one brother. I am the second generation born in the United States. I am also the second generation to attend college. My mother received her Master's degree, and I don't know of my father's whereabouts. The challenges I face are the pressure from my environment and gang influences. The gang has not been something that I can easily get out of, but this has allowed me an outlet to unleash my anger. My goal is to complete my education, but my environment has been a major factor that interferes with my progress.

Frida. My name is Frida. I am 19 years old. I am an AB 540 student. I was born in Zitacuaro, Michoacan, Mexico. I was brought to the United States when I was nine years old. My challenges include: a very hard transition to the community college system, because of the

culture, language, new traditions and lack of financial support. Since my parents are undocumented like myself I feel that I struggle more. My mother is my motivation and for her I will complete my degree no matter what happens. She saves every penny and does not buy herself anything just to make sure that I get my education. I want to help my mother and become a role model for my little sister who will need my help. I have a dream and it is not an act.

Cuatlicue. My name is Cuatlicue. I am 23 years old. My grandmother helped me and my family to obtain our legal residency. I grew up in Mexico. I came to the United States at the age of 18 seeking a better opportunity so that I could help my family in Mexico. I have faced many challenges, such as lack of money, my limited English or language barrier and my lack of understanding of not knowing how the education system works, along with being separated from my family who all live in Mexico. I have been in the United States for five years, and I plan to transfer next semester to the California State University to Major in Art. My goal is to accomplish my dreams.

Tonantzín. My name is Tonantzín. I am 18 years old. I am the first in my family to attend college. I was born in Oakland, California. I am the oldest of three children. Both of my parents were born in Mexico. I have met various challenges as a college student. I have had a difficult time expressing myself because of my shyness. Understanding how to get help in college all alone has created a big barrier. Although I was born in the United States I don't feel that I get the same benefits as other students. The lack of my parents' education has made it difficult to obtain financial aid support. My school does not have workshops for Latino parents to help them understand the paperwork and requirements. This barrier will not stop me. I want to learn so that I can help other first generation students with immigrant parents like me.

Itzel. My name is Itzel. I am 19 years old. I am an AB 540 student. I was born in Mexico and was brought to the United States when I was one year old. I have faced various challenges which include lack of money, my limited English or language barrier, and my lack of understanding in learning how to operate in the American Education system. With no back up, my parents expect the best out of me not realizing that I started in a very different ground level than all the rest of my classmates. Even though I have attended school in the United States from an early age, I still am treated as an illegal. I was accepted to the University of California system from high school, but, because my parents didn't have the money, I ended up in the Community College system. As an undocumented student, my mission is to look for opportunities and show everyone how academically competitive an AB 540 student can be.

Esperanza. My name is Esperanza. I am 19 years old. I was born in San Leandro, California. Both my parents were born in Mexico. I am the third child of five. My two older sisters dropped out of college. My parents depend on me to do something different. The main challenge that I have faced has been my parents' lack of education. I find myself having a hard time getting services in college. Usually I don't know where to go to get the help I need. Sometimes I feel alone because my parents don't understand my struggle between school and home demands. Another challenge has been my language skill level and my accent. As a first generation student, my goal is to get out of poverty and make a difference.

External Factors

Within this section of the study, the co-researchers dealt with research question 1: What external factors do Chicano/Latino students perceive as determinants of their academic success/failure? The co-researchers identified school, family and society – institutions through

which run the influences of race, class, and gender – as major external factors that served as determinants of Chicano/Latino students' success and failure.

School Issues. The co-researchers reflected on and confronted the experiences they had at their respective schools in K-12. The co-researchers entered this process of reflection as individuals but shifted to establishing a community amongst themselves, whereby awareness emerged as a collective. From this collective awareness, as they reflected on the factors that they felt had impeded them, all the co-researchers agreed that education is an important factor to get out of poverty and improve their standard of living. Education provides opportunities, understanding and consciousness. Itzel asserted that “education is important because it opens our eyes to what is out there, to things that our parents can’t really tell us about. It’s a whole new world.” The co-researchers also felt that it was equally important for them to take responsibility and start asking questions as to why so many Chicano/Latino students fail within the education system. Co-researchers noted that it was crucial to understand student roles and responsibilities. It was also equally critical to look at what the education system has not done to help the students it serves.

Frida asked:

If a large part of Chicanos/Latinos drop out of K-12. If they are not prepared we need to ask why? Si dicen que hicieron algo mal, pero para decir que no están preparados, tiene que haber algo mal con el sistema.

[If they say they did something bad, but in saying that they are not prepared there has to be something wrong with the system.]

Frida is analyzing the drop out rate while questioning the responsibility of the educational system to the Chicano/Latino population. The co-researchers identified the lack of retention of Chicanos/Latinos as a result of irrelevant curriculum that excludes them.

They further reported that Chicanos/Latinos are neither taught their history nor what other Chicanos/Latinos have experienced in the education system. This lack of access to knowledge places the students at a disadvantage academically. Analyzing and thinking critically are aspects of learning that serve as tools to better understand one's historical and individual experience within the education system. Both their history and academic skills are inextricable and essential for the advancement of this population in the education system. When available, this understanding assists the students to learn what they don't know while validating their knowledge base; thus, the lack of culturally relevant curriculum continues to disengage students from both school and learning.

Zapata stated the following:

The educational system is messed up and if we know the history of what has happened and how the education system has treated us for years we would be able to analyze the injustices that have been going on for a long time.

Awareness of this situation enabled the co-researchers to enhance their critical insight into what is missing in the education system. Toward this, the collective dialogues created a community awareness among them. One co-researcher specifically commented that the U.S. education system is failing Chicanos/Latinos. It is not because Chicanos/Latinos don't want to learn. If the rigor of the curricula in Latin American countries were compared to the U.S. curriculum, they would see that it is more advanced in Latin America. Clearly, Latinos are learning in other countries, therefore, crossing the border would not mean that the students had lost the capacity to learn.

Frida asserted;

El sistema no ayuda, no es que los Latinos no aprendamos o que seamos tontos, porque puedes ir a México y comparar cómo aprenden allá. El material que están aprendiendo es mucho mejor que el de aquí entonces nosotros somos capaces de entender y de aprender lo que debemos aprender. Pero no nos están dando la oportunidad para aprender.

[The system does not help, it's not that Latinos do not learn or that we are dumb. Because if you go to Mexico and you compare how they learn over there, the material that they are learning is much better than the material here. We are capable of understanding and learning what we are supposed to learn. But they are not giving us the opportunity to learn.]

This comparison to other countries where Latinos are successful and advance in their learning shows a broadening of understanding of their environment compared to other Latinos. As the co-researchers continued their dialogue regarding challenges within the education system, they shared other experiences in which they felt excluded from being part of the mainstream regular classes. The co-researchers identified multiple sub-themes which continuously affect Chicano/Latino students. For example, they noted school location, their environment, and limited language skills as determining factors for school and classroom placement and tracking. In addition, the co-researchers' experiences with their teachers, counselors and the Puente Program along with the lack of financial resources raised their awareness of how these factors tend to contribute to poor educational outcomes. Sharing these experiences with each other heightened their awareness of the pervasiveness of the barriers within education that they continue to face.

Students' Neighborhood Environment: Violence, Racial profiling and Poverty. As the co-researchers focused on particular barriers, they began to realize the extent of the influence of their neighborhood environment on their educational opportunities. They noted that the lack of district resources was a major factor in their educational settings as was the school location and their neighborhood environments. More precisely, coming from an impoverished community placed them at a disadvantage. Naturally, the allocation of resources to the district made a big difference and caused a trickle down effect in the support provided to the students: i.e., a) classes

and technology access, b) counseling, c) extracurricular activities – music, art and physical education.

The co-researchers acknowledged that within their environment they experienced lack of motivation, peer pressure, violence, and confrontational issues with law enforcement. Zapata stated that, “as Latinos let’s face it most of us don’t feel motivated for the same reasons of what we see out in the streets, we see gangs and other things going on.” Another co-researcher added that their environment and the location of the school made a difference in students’ learning. Marcos stated that, “the schools by my house are all in low income neighborhoods. These schools are located south of Hayward near B Street. If you go up the hill to E street the elementary school is one of the better ones in Hayward.” Another co-researcher shared her own experience of living in Oakland in another low-income neighborhood and what she felt about attending school in the Oakland school district.

Itzel stated,

I went to Castlemont high school my first year and then I was able to transfer to a Charter School. It was just Latinos and Blacks. From my experience, the whole system kind of pressures students to get out of school like by itself. The schools have all these bad expectations that sometimes the students can’t handle and then they get pushed out just as the system wanted them to. In the area I grew up Oakland, the whole system does not work for you it is like it is set up to favor only one particular race. There are not a lot of role models that I can follow in their steps. I have to find a way to make it on my own.

While the co-researchers noted that they were challenged by various influences, one major concern was their peers/friends. In the end, it was up to the individual to make a decision regarding their education or their environmental influences.

Frida asserted,

Yo pienso que como Latinos tenemos mucha influencia de los amigos. Yo casi estoy segura que todos de aquí hemos pasado por eso, algunos sí hemos decidido no tomar y algunos sí hemos caído por la influencia. En mi caso yo llegué a un punto en decir, “Okay, esto no sirve. ¿Cómo voy a tratar de satisfacer a otra persona y si yo sé que está

mal? También en mi familia, mi mamá me pasa diciendo, no te juntes con fulanita, no te juntes con sotanita. Yo soy la que decidí sobre mis límites, yo sabía a dónde quería llegar y lo que iba hacer. Todo depende mucho de cada quien y que tan vulnerable sea a la influencia.

[I think that as Latinos we are influenced by our friends a lot. I am almost sure that all of us here have had this type of experience. Some of us decided not to drink and some of us have allowed ourselves to be influenced. In my case I reached a point to say okay this does not work to try and satisfy another person especially when I know that it is wrong. Also in my family my mother always tells me don't hang out with so and so. But I am the one who decides regarding my limits. I knew what I wanted to do and where I want to end up. It all depends on the individual and how vulnerable they are to their influences.]

Even when co-researchers stated that their peers/friends did not have a direct influence on their own academic success, they reported worrying about their peers' and friends' choices and life circumstances. This internal pre-occupation interrupted their academic focus. For example, the co-researchers were well aware of the gang violence and murders happening in their community. Two co-researchers shared concern for their friends and the influence of the affects of their impoverished environment.

Esperanza explained,

I don't really have a lot of friends in college. They all have kids right now. I came to college with them and they left me alone. Some of my other friends go to paid schools like Western Career College or Heald's College. The rest of them are still doing what they have been doing since they graduated. They work, you know go to work in the morning and go in the streets in the afternoon and that is it every day posted outside of their house waiting for something to go down.

Itzel agreed and shared,

I live in Oakland and a lot of people in my neighborhood dropped out of school in middle school and never went back because they had a lot of problems with the law. I grew up with them and you want to push them to kind of find the motivation that I have. A lot of my friends that live in my neighborhood were born here they have everything (citizenship). I don't have everything and that pulls me down. I think the environment affects them. Even though you want to open their eyes they just have to go through their own experience to find something that will help them find the right path.

Itzel continued to explain how much of a challenge her environment posed to her pursuit of education:

Living in my environment is hard. I don't know how I focus. Sometimes I am doing my homework and then I hear gunshots out of nowhere or if I am walking down my neighborhood I see my friends getting high. It is hard to try to focus on school.

Another co-researcher asserted that his main frustration within his environment is with the police who constantly stop him just because he is Latino.

Marcos shared his frustration,

I get pulled over like once a month or I get fined by the police. One time I got pulled over and the cop comes to me and says, "Have you been drinking"? I smiled and said, nothing but hot chocolate, he's like, "Can you step out of the car". I'm like Naah I'm not going to do it." I'm just kidding, but you know what I'm saying, you get profiled a lot for being a Latino or for doing nothing. I'm not looking for trouble, but this happens to me a lot.

Even though some of the co-researchers stated that their friends did not influence them, they did report that they were emotionally affected as violent situations erupted within their environments and students from their neighborhoods were gunned down and killed. In a personal telephone conversation with Esperanza, she informed me that, "she would not be able to attend one of our group sessions because a close friend [of hers] from her neighborhood was killed by gang violence." She stated that, "I received a phone call and was told that my friend had been shot and passed away." Esperanza was emotionally affected – she was crying.

On another occasion after one of the group sessions, the researcher invited the co-researchers to have lunch. Frida, Zapata, and Itzel were the only ones that could attend. As we ordered our food, they started discussing different situations in their lives. Frida shared how there were a lot of gang issues at the high school she had attended in Hayward. Itzel then mentioned a recent experience she had. She stated that, "her ex-boyfriend was recently killed, which they believed was related to gang violence." When Itzel shared his name Zapata stated,

“That was my cousin.” He went into detail about how this murder had affected his whole family. They talked about the funeral and Itzel started to cry. Aside from educational challenges, all the co-researchers reported dealing with environmental stress from the constant occurrence of violence and racial profiling in their neighborhoods. The co-researchers clearly illustrated through their observations how these environmental traumas brought psychological and emotional distress that made it difficult to stay focused on their academic success.

School Tracking Labels: ELL, Shelter, and Bilingual. Aside from recognizing how living in a low-income community and environment made a major difference in their education, the co-researchers noted that language skills also affected their placement. The co-researchers conveyed with frustration that the experience of not sharing the same common language (English) in schools placed them on a specific track throughout their educational journeys. From their perspective, (on the part of teachers, administrators, and counselors) assumptions, profiling, aggression, stereotyping and expecting low performance throughout the education process delays the possibility of academic fulfillment. In addition, the practice of not accelerating them as their language skills advanced was evidence of the indifference that the education system exhibits toward Chicano/Latino students.

Esperanza asserted,

It was frustrating for me because I have been labeled as an English Language Learner (ELL) since kindergarten. In high school nobody was bilingual. There was no one in the office who spoke Spanish and it was hard for my mom to go to school and check in.

Sadly, it is a misconception to think that being placed in English Language Learner, Shelter and Bilingual classes would provide an expectation of success. Teachers are just as limited in their skills in Spanish as the rest of the staff.

Itzel reported,

I was in bilingual classes but it was confusing because most of my teachers did not speak Spanish fluently. They knew a few words and that is why they called themselves bilingual. When I was in elementary, I couldn't connect with the teacher or communicate because I did not know how to express myself in English as I did in Spanish. So, it didn't give me the support as a bilingual class should give a student that does not speak fluent English.

Other co-researchers noted that they were tracked in shelter classes. This type of class was considered a class for Spanish speaking students, but also for students that had attendance problems. The class dynamics in the shelter classes did not create an effective learning environment, nor were credits given for repeating the shelter classes. For example, Marcos asserted that, "shelter was for students that don't have the ability to speak English along with those that do not care about school. We were all put into the same classes."

Frida added,

Desde Junior high estaba en Shelter, cómo experimentan con nosotros. El maestro había llegado allí y era Nuevo, la clase era un caos, no aprendimos nada. For example, in High School there is the shelter thing. Como una categoría para los que según no hablan Inglés. Y el consejero nunca te deja saber nada. Te ponen en shelter ellos, pero ya al último te dicen. O y nada más dos clases de shelter te van a contar. Shelter es como clases para mainly Latinos y otros estudiantes que casi no asisten a la escuela.

[Since Junior high school I was in Shelter classes, that's how they experiment with us. The teacher had arrived to the school he was new. The class was chaos and we did not learn anything. For example, in high school there is a shelter thing. It is a category for the students who supposedly do not speak English. The counselor never lets you know. They place you in shelter classes and they tell you at the end. Oh and only two shelter classes count. Shelter classes are for mainly Latinos and other students who have poor school attendance.]

Fundamentally, Chicano/Latino students felt that placing them in specific classes at various levels of their schooling was a form of tracking them in the education system. Throughout their education they reported having negative experiences because of the attached label of limited language skills they now carried with them, and this placed them at a disadvantage. Another co-researcher explained how this tracking label had affected him.

Marcos asserted,

Another thing that pisses me off, that in high school the tracking puts the Latino into a low tracking system where they (Latinos) get caught in taking classes with a bunch of people that necessarily don't care and are not really into education. And there is really no way to get out, so for me when I got to the community college level, I was stuck. I found myself catching up, constantly.

The co-researchers reported feeling a negative stigma from this early label, one which followed them into community college. From the awareness brought by their shared experiences, the co-researchers felt hopeless and believed that the education system did not care about them or their academic advancement.

Tracking labels were just one aspect of the co-researchers' experiences. They all concurred that their teachers and counselors played a major role in the selection of classes they took within K-12 and community college. Specifically in K through 12 grades, Chicano/Latino students followed the recommendations of their counselors. Ideally, students depend on guidance and encouragement from their teachers and counselors. However, the co-researchers reported that what they remembered was their teachers and counselors doubting and questioning their capabilities.

Doubt from Teachers and Counselors. All the co-researchers indicated that their teachers' lack of encouragement and support affected their motivation in accomplishing their academic goals. They all concluded that the teachers' comments held a great amount of weight. The co-researchers felt that maybe the intention was not to hurt or discourage them, but what came across was doubt. One of them shared that, while in high school, his teacher made a comment which made him feel inferior. Marcos stated that, "my teacher told me you are surprisingly intelligent." In another incident, half of the co-researchers reported that, while

attending a college course, the teacher demonstrated through exposing his mindset regarding Chicano/Latino students how he doubted their ability to succeed.

Frida reported,

Como lo que nos dijo el maestro de Anthropología, he said “all of you are Mexican? Eramos tres. We were like Yeah! He said “that is weird because, yo tenía una idea que los Mexicans, they’re lazy and they’re burritos” El era de la India.

[Like the comment that our Anthropology teacher said, he said “All of you are Mexican? There were three of us. We were like Yeah!” He said, “that is weird, because I had the idea that Mexicans, they’re lazy and dumb” he was from India.]

The teacher questioned the students’ capability based on his own personal bias. He thought that Mexicans were not smart or motivated. All the co-researchers reported feeling their teachers’ and counselors’ lack of belief in their capabilities to succeed. Although they experienced this consistently at school, they also asserted that they were aware that it was a common societal sentiment that Chicanos/Latinos deal with on a daily basis.

All the co-researchers stated that school and community college counselors’ expertise of teaching them how to navigate the system, programs, and resources was a critical necessity. The co-researchers noted that information disseminated by the counselors can assist in the acclimation to the school or college. Itzel stated that, “one of the biggest challenges that a lot of students have is finding a way to navigate the whole system.” Frida also expressed that first generation Chicanos/Latinos need the help because they don’t know how the system works. In addition, Chicanos/Latinos come with their own fear of getting lost in the system.

Frida asserted,

Yo pienso que para los Latinos que son inmigrantes que están llendo al colegio es muy difícil porque empiezan sin saber nada. Te sientes como un niño perdido, desorientado sin quién te ayude.

[I think that for immigrant Latinos that are starting college it is very difficult because they start without knowing anything. You feel like a lost child, disoriented without anyone there to help you.]

All the co-researchers agreed that a major factor within the education system was the support from their counselors who serve as the guide, assist in selecting classes, and make sure that students complete all necessary requirements to prepare them for transfer. Yet, as students transitioned to other schools, counselors receiving them questioned and doubted the students' capabilities in specific programs.

Although most of the co-researchers reported having a common negative experience with their counselor, one reported having a great experience with her college counselor who was not part of the Puente program, with whom she continues to meet. This co-researcher identified and explained specific aspects she attributed to making her experience a positive encounter. The aspects included the use of the Spanish language. The time he spent with her also made her feel that the counselor cared about her questions and concerns. More importantly, he took the time to call her back after the appointment to provide additional information. Although other counselors also spoke Spanish, they did not demonstrate the same concern for Chicano/Latino students within the community college.

Frida shared,

Por ejemplo el último consejero que vi se tomó el tiempo. Nunca había tenido un consejero que realmente por ejemplo que me aiga dicho que we need to follow up like tenemos que hacer algo. El me llamó a mi casa y le contestó mi papá y le dijo dígame a Frida que me contacte porque ya tengo la información. Lo que me gustó es que te lo dice en español. La otra consejera habla español pero como que no ayuda.

[For example, the last counselor I saw took the time to meet with me. I have never had a Counselor that really, for example that he has told me we need to follow up like we have to do something. He called my house and my dad answered and he told him tell Frida to get in touch with me because I have the information. What I liked is that he says it in Spanish. The other counselor speaks Spanish but doesn't help.]

The co-researchers agreed that more positive encounters with counselors like Frida's could help Chicano/Latino students feel more comfortable in college. This type of experience is important in the development of the student and counselor relationship since counselors are aware of programs that can help Chicanos/Latinos in both high school and community college, enabling these students to open doors to different opportunities like the Puente program.

Lack of Campus Financial Resources. The co-researchers also determined that a central factor of their academic success or failure that goes hand in hand with support from their teachers and counselors was campus financial resources. As students transition to community college from high school, their teachers' and counselors' support was critical, and the information they obtained from these resources was essential to make better-informed decisions. The co-researchers expressed, however, that there was a major disconnect between the information they received – for example, in the area of financial educational initiatives and the realities of their lives; this made it difficult to receive financial aid and book resources.

Within the community college these co-researchers were a part of, new methods were being utilized to make sure the money stayed within the campus. The co-researchers reported that, for specific majors, students were required to have a code they must use to buy the books from the campus bookstore only. Students were obligated to pay the higher cost for the books.

Frida noted that,

Lo que yo noto es que los libros están más caros y para ciertas carreras los estudiantes tienen que tener un código para comprar sus libros en la tienda de la escuela. Es como un monopoly. Es la manera que hacen que los estudiantes compren los libros a fuerza.

[What I notice is that the books are very expensive and for certain majors the students need to have a code to buy the books in the school's bookstore. It's like a monopoly. This is the way that the students are forced to buy their books.]

The co-researchers also reported that alternatives to buying books at these set exorbitant prices were becoming obsolete. The cost for books had increased more than the community college registration fees themselves; this had created another barrier for Chicano/Latino students. Cuatlicue revealed the following:

Los bookstores de las escuelas lo que están haciendo es de que publican solamente libros para la escuela entonces los estudiantes no pueden buscar los libros en lugares fuera de la escuela como online o Barnes n Noble. No pueden porque el libro sólo se vende en la escuela y son caros. Creo que todo eso es parte de la política de la escuela y la sociedad. Lo que están haciendo es que uno como estudiantes no tenga opciones sinó que nos están encerrando en una cajita porque no hay dinero, porque los libros, porque la familia, por todo. Y te van encerrando y no te quieren dejar mover es lo que quieren hacer y es difícil salir porque no hay alternativas.

[What the college bookstores are doing is that they are only publishing books for the school so that students cannot look for books outside of the school. The students are not able to obtain their books online or from Barnes and Noble. They are not able because the book is only sold at the college, and they are expensive. I believe that all this is part of the politics of the college and society. What they are doing is that we as students do not have options. They are enclosing us into a box because there is no money, because of the books, because of the family, for everything. They push you and they don't allow you to move that is what they want to do and it is difficult to get out because there are no alternatives.]

Another co-researcher explained the financial challenges she faces each semester. She explained that she often had to determine whether she could hold off on buying her books in order to pay for her registration fees and save herself from being kicked out of the community college.

Esperanza added that,

I need to buy the books but I need to pay for my class registration fees first so they won't kick me out of the system. If you don't pay, you're out, and they give the spot to somebody else; so right now, first I will probably pay for my registration and then my books.

Another co-researcher explained the challenges he had faced due to the increased cost of the books required for classes. He shared a few of his strategies that have allowed him to continue his education at the community college.

Zapata stated,

For example, the books are expensive. Right now I am taking a class without the literature book. I also had to drop my Astronomy class because the book was \$150.00. For my art class this summer I asked another student who I knew took the class if I could buy her used book and supplies from her because I could not afford them new.

The co-researchers concluded that because of rising registration costs and book fees, they were consistently attempting to find new ways to survive within the community college and not drop out. The rising costs in community college were a major barrier because of the lack of personal funds. The co-researchers claimed that financial aid resources that would accommodate their needs to accomplish their educational goals was nonexistent, especially for the AB 540 undocumented students. Only one out of the eight co-researchers was receiving financial aid. Prior to enrolling in community college the co-researchers had believed that, because they had been in the public school system their whole lives, they would be able to obtain campus services. These issues of students' neighborhood/environment, school tracking labels, doubt from teachers and counselors, and lack of campus financial resources in the education system reveal how Chicano/Latino students are set up to fail. Although the education system is expected to provide equal access to all students, this study reveals that the education system implicitly is sending convoluted and conflicting messages to Chicano/Latino students regarding their success, failure, and ultimate potential as students and citizens. These messages pronounce the choque in the students' lives, detrimentally affecting their self-esteem and academic success.

Society Issues: Racism and Classism. After building awareness, from the issues they face in the education system, the co-researchers began to question the various barriers they perceived to their education. They identified the ways in which their race and class made them vulnerable to fall prey to the system and in society. They commented on the racist stereotypes or lack of understanding that guided decisions made by their teachers, counselors, mentors, and

school district personnel. They also began to question the validity of the increasing cost of education overall, and the ways in which these increasing costs specifically impacted Chicano/Latino students.

The co-researchers asserted that there was a common sentiment in society regarding Chicanos/Latinos and what they are capable of doing. Itzel stated that, “people think that Mexicans don’t know how to do anything but cook, clean and do construction work.” The other co-researchers observed that, if Chicanos/Latinos remain uneducated, they will remain stagnant in society. Esperanza commented that, “since we don’t know our educational system anyone can take advantage of us; we are never going to be moving up, we always are going to be down in the same place.”

Cuatlicue, questioning racist stereotypes, added that,

When in school, it does not matter if you are in Math or English it is the same, there are a lot of problems because they think that Latinos cannot do it. If you are Latino they think that we are lazy and we never pass a class but it also exists outside of school. We must also survive the stereotypes of society.

Frida also questioned this act of stereotyping by stating the fact that Chicanos/Latinos do go to college, suggesting that their success or failure in school may in fact be affected not by their inherent suitability for education, rather by the host of pressures exerted on them from society.

She explained,

Yo me imagino que si ya los Latinos toman el primer paso de ir al colegio entonces no es de que somos flojos o no queremos ir a la escuela. Son los estereotipos que hay aquí de los Latinos. Tal vez hay obstáculos que nos están oprimiendo.

[I imagine that if Latinos take the first step to go to college then this means that we are not lazy or that we do not want to go to school. It’s the stereotypes, that exist here [in the United States] regarding Latinos. Maybe there are obstacles that are oppressing us.

Zapata agreed with Frida, but identified the situation to be much deeper and rooted historically in,

¡Racismo! Yo creo que es mucho racismo por las cosas que han pasado en el pasado. Y también porque piensan que nosotros como Latinos no tenemos el derecho de educarnos. Es como un “Manifest Destiny” it is still existing today.

[Racism! I believe that there is a lot of racism because of the things that have happened in the past. Also, because people think, that we as Latinos don’t have the right to an education. Its’ like a “Manifest Destiny” it is still existing today.]

He continued to examine and question the exclusionary practices of an education system that was organized to privilege White and upper class students.

What we need to ask ourselves is why are they cutting educational funds? I thought education was the future. We are the future and why are they trying to mess up their own future. Why are they charging more for books? Why make it harder to become educated when education is supposed to be the foundation of the future? Are they trying to just limit it to the rich, the people who can afford it?

The co-researchers determined that class was a vital factor that limited the dissemination of resources within their communities, crucially determining whether students advanced both academically and socially. The students’ socio-economic class impacted their access to necessary educational resources.

Esperanza shared that,

I think money is a factor because there are so many classes that give you a list of the books you need and then we buy the books and we only use one chapter. I think teachers should let us know that...I could have made a copy of the page instead of spending all this money on books that I don’t need.

In this experience, Esperanza was frustrated not only by the exorbitant cost of books, but also by her teacher’s lack of sensitivity to the financial pressures on students. As Chicanos/Latinos become aware, they continue to examine other areas of their experience, and demonstrate their ability to shift from awareness to questioning. Esperanza went on to question the inabilities of school personnel to provide access and guidance in the education system, through sharing two disappointing experiences she had with counselors in high school:

My high school counselor told me, “You come from Oakland. Why are you in an AVID course? Do you think that you can handle it?” I handled it my whole freshman year what makes them think that I can’t do it. I really felt bad when they told me that but I stuck it out until they pushed me out of the class.

When she transferred to another high school she faced a similar experience.

Esperanza explained,

My counselor at San Leandro high, when I would try to go for help, when they gave me a wrong class and I brought it to her attention she just told me you just have to stay there [in the class] and you can’t get a lower grade than a C. They would be mad at you.

In reporting this second experience, Esperanza communicated how she felt something was not right but was not able to advocate for herself. When she started attending college she claimed to have a more positive experience with the Puente Counselor. It was clear that this more positive experience was in part due to her greater awareness of her general needs as a student and willingness to pursue them. By the time she entered community college, she had been able to reflect on how the racism she perceived from earlier counselors had stagnated her ability to advocate for herself. Esperanza asserted, “I like being here at this college, because I have Mr. Cuauhtémoc who is the Puente Counselor he understands me and talks to me. When I speak to Mr. Cuauhtémoc he encourages me, but for academic help I don’t know where to go so I don’t go anywhere.” Despite the fact that this experience was more positive, Esperanza still felt as though she was lacking necessary academic support services.

While the Puente Program was conceived in order to provide additional student support, Esperanza’s findings show that unfulfilled gaps remain. In an attempt to meet some of these unsatisfied needs, the Puente Program designates mentors to individual students based on their career interests and educational goals as part of their efforts to build community support for these students. However, two co-researchers began to question their experiences with their mentors and express their frustration. Much like the teachers and counselors, mentors come with their

own personal experiences that have a direct impact on Chicano/Latino students. As the co-researchers explained, their mentors came with their own biases, and they, too, sent messages that were not always positive.

Cuatlicue asserted,

Otra cosa que recuerdo es que estábamos trabajando con los mentores y estaban haciendo un comentario. Que siendo ellos ciudadanos de aquí, muchos de sus impuestos van para las escuelas públicas. Lo que ellos quisieron decir, acá muy bajita la mano, que echen a los inmigrantes para fuera. Una dijo, “Yo no quiero que mi dinero se vaya para las escuelas públicas para niños inmigrantes.” Eso fue lo que dijeron y yo me quedé callada.

[Another thing that I remember is that we were working with our mentors and they were commenting. Since they were citizens from here, some of their taxes go to public schools. What they were saying in a discreet way was that they should send the immigrants out of the country. One of them said, “I don’t want my money to go to public schools for immigrant kids. That is what they said and I kept quiet.]

This type of experience with mentors within the education system, combined with students’ experiences of lack of cultural sensitivity and awareness of some teachers and counselors, continues to silence Chicano/Latino students.

Frida explained,

Teníamos que hablar con nuestros mentores de una situación. Yo mencioné AB 540 y el mentor dijo [We had to talk to our mentors about an issue. I mentioned AB 540 and the mentor said] “what is that?” They didn’t know anything that is sad porque entre los Latinos debemos estar informados [because amongst Latinos we should be informed.]

Another co-researcher noted that school personnel disseminated information without providing the necessary guidance to meet the academic deadline or considering the language barrier that impeded communication between her parents and the school.

Tonantzin asserted,

They gave me the forms three days before the deadline. I was angry. Luego fuimos yo y mis padres a una presentación donde les pidieron a mis padres que traigan cierta información. Mis padres dijeron que no les ayudó en nada y no sabían que hacer.

[Then my parents and I went to a presentation where they asked my parents to bring certain information. My parents said that it did not help them and they did not know what to do.]

Overall, the co-researchers interpreted these discouraging experiences as an accumulation of factors conveying to them that the education system does not care about Chicano/Latino students. What is revealed through this study is that Chicano/Latino students are provided physical access but are denied their right to an education. This implicit exclusion seemed to be communicated regardless if Chicano/Latino students are United States citizens or undocumented. These experiences in education and society have a deeper effect of producing *el choque* in Chicano/Latino students, and of disengaging them from learning and believing that they can be successful. Angered by her educational experience, Frida exclaimed, “que no nos preparan y no nos ponen prioridad. En otras palabras no preparan a los [Chicanos]/Latinos y no importa su estatus migratorio.” [They don’t prepare us and they don’t give us priority. In other words, they don’t prepare [Chicanos]/Latinos, and their immigration status does not matter.] The co-researchers affirmed that the education system denigrates Chicanos/Latinos. Zapata contended that, “they don’t respect us and it doesn’t seem that they care because if they did, they would make specific programs that would help the undocumented.” These comments conveyed frustration and hopelessness about the messages the co-researchers internalized from the education system. PAR assisted them in expressing these feelings, but also created a space for a critical dialogue that increased their awareness to the point where they could collectively question their experiences. Although they explicitly questioned the discriminatory practices of the education system, the themes that continued to emerge through these findings were race and class that are part of society.

Family Issues: Culture and Traditions. In this section I will discuss how the factors of mixed messages, role reversal, and family expectations based on birth order and its attendant responsibilities make family serve as both a support and a burden for Chicano/Latino students.

Mixed messages from family. The co-researchers reported that Chicano/Latino students face mixed messages from the education system, not the least of which is that whether or not they have attended public school in the U.S. their entire lives, their (or their parents') AB 540 status ultimately will determine – and often limit – their access to higher education. This mixed message is compounded by – and reflected in – the mixed messages regarding education the co-researchers received from their families; the co-researchers explained that often, their families expected them to follow their educational dreams, yet what prevented them from excelling in education was their family's lack of resources and understanding of the educational process. This lack of understanding which many of the co-researchers reported made *el choque* more evident. They also reported that their parents agreed that education was important, but they still sent mixed messages that added stress to the student's academic life by repeatedly pulling the co-researchers away from their studies to fulfill various roles within the family; regardless, they remained committed to struggling to learn how to navigate the community college system in order to pursue their educational goals. They were not always aware of the extent of these struggles in their families. Specifically, Frida's father told her, “para qué estudias? Ponte a trabajar mejor. Y a mi mamá le reprocha el hecho de que me motivé. Y le dice “en vez que la enseñes a trabajar (se puso a llorar). [Why do you study? It is better that you work. He says to my mom why is she supporting me. He will say, “Instead of teaching her how to work (she cried)].” The family's divided values regarding education further accentuated *el choque*, affecting the co-researchers emotionally.

Equally, Itzel reported feeling overwhelmed by her family's mixed messages:

They want me to pursue my dream and graduate and go to a UC school, but they don't know how to encourage me to get there. Because they also want me to be a daughter; besides being a student, they also kind of pressure me to do things around the house, help my mom, work and help my sister, and be a good role model. Besides all that pressure, I have to find ways to find my own help. They want you to go to school but they are not helping me.

Tonantzin also shared her experience of mixed messages from her family:

It's hard for me because my parents still have not applied for my financial aid. They want me to go to school, and then they want me to be at home helping with my younger siblings. I feel a lot of pressure.

Although parents may have encouraged the co-researchers in word to continue their education, their lack of understanding how to navigate the education system impeded the co-researchers' academic success. In Esperanza's case she stated that, "I can't go home and ask for help because they don't know anything, my parents tell my sisters to help me but how could they when they didn't finish school either." This experience illustrates an attempt by the parents to try to figure out, unfortunately unsuccessfully, who can help with school. For these students, education is a necessity and an avenue through which they confront *el choque*. However, the inability of the parents to provide full support, along with the inability of the student to communicate how the expectations at school conflict with their home environment exacerbate the student's internal struggle. Zapata asserted that, "family was one of the biggest factors that crippled the students." All the co-researchers agreed that the mixed messages from their families had a negative impact on them.

Role reversal and family expectations. Aside from mixed messages, the co-researchers reported unspoken family expectations such as role reversal. All the co-researchers claimed that they were expected to take on their parents' roles at home in order for the family to survive. Parents ignored that the co-researchers had other responsibilities outside of the home, while

teachers and school staff were neither aware of nor engaged with students' significant responsibilities at home. Many of the co-researchers were required to care for their younger siblings along with handling multiple tasks within the household while also providing financial support for the family. Both the institutions of school and family imposed significant and competing demands on these students' time and energy.

The demands of their parents often affected the students' commitment to their academic success.

Itzel reported that,

It is hard to put all those things together. I wake up, get ready go to school, but since my younger sister is diabetic, I help my mom with her medicine. I watch over what she eats. When I come home I have to wash the dishes, vacuum, and clean, because my mom works.

The co-researchers noted that, within their parent roles, they also wore multiple hats. Marcos asserted that he does everything, "I am like the parent, the tyrant, the tutor, and the brother. Once my brother is done with his homework, I will play with him." Zapata agreed and added that "you have to be the parent the brother, the sister, and do the chores. You have to wake up, go to school, and study. Sometimes it seems impossible."

All the co-researchers reported that their parents expected them to meet all the parental responsibilities without being asked. Frida noted that "ellos esperan que yo recoja a mi hermana la lleve a la casa, le dé de comer, que la ponga hacer su tarea y aparte hacer mi tarea. Es otra responsabilidad y es difícil." [They expect that I pick up my sister, take her home, feed her, assist her with her homework and also that I do my own homework. This is another responsibility and it is difficult.] Marcos also added that, in his situation, his parents expected him to help pay bills: "whatever they can't pay, they put it on me." Acting as the parent required that the co-

researchers consistently place their family first in their decision-making and themselves last. These expectations created additional pressure and stress in their lives.

Birth order and its attendant responsibilities. All the co-researchers reported pressure from their parents that sometimes felt invisible. The pressure was experienced through various avenues, both spoken and unspoken. The pressure also came from being the eldest child and what was expected within the family. The co-researchers reported that being the eldest child had its place in the family and this status required that they automatically know what needed to be done. For example, Tonantzín stated that, “since I’m the oldest daughter in my family, I’m usually expected to do a lot of things and sometimes that stresses me out.” Furthermore, the eldest child who moves away from home is still expected to help even if they are in another country, even if it is over the phone. The responsibility is still there.

Cuatlicue shared,

Soy la mayor y todos mis hermanos cuentan conmigo. Por ejemplo ahorita yo estoy aquí viviendo en los estado unidos y mis hermanos me hablan de México y me dicen, sabe que necesito que me ayudes con la tarea, me dicen yo no entiendo....que hago? Entonces estoy viviendo como que un pedazo aquí y un pedazo allá.

[I am the oldest and all my siblings count on me. For example, presently I live in the United States and my siblings call me from Mexico to ask for help with their homework. They tell me that they don’t understand...what do I do? I feel split. Half of me is here and the other half of me is over there.]

Among half of the co-researchers, there was a sense that their parents did not communicate their requests, but they expected results. One co-researcher, Zapata noted that “they don’t ask you, but it’s there.” Another co-researcher Tonantzín stated that, “there is an invisible pressure that we have to deal with.” For the other half of the co-researchers, parental expectations were verbalized. Frida explained that, “lo que no haces en el trabajo lo cumples en la casa. Como mis padres me dicen ponte a limpiar, cuida a tu hermana y esto y el otro.” [So

what you don't do at work you do it at home. My parents tell me clean the house, take care of your sister, and do this and that.] Significant pressure and stress came from the parents' expectations. Marcos noted that "it's' invisible but at the same time not so invisible." These experiences of the invisible and unspoken family expectations burdened the co-researchers and kept them in *el choque*.

Summary of external factors

In conclusion, the external factors of school, family and society play a significant role in Chicano/Latino students' academic success. The Chicano/Latino students' reported experiences in schools demonstrate that discriminatory practices within the education system continue to exclude them from their right to an education. Larger society has a connected pipeline of policies and practices that also exclude Chicanos/Latinos from opportunities within mainstream society. Finally, school and society are clearly seen as negative aspects of the Chicano/Latino student experiences while family plays a dual role, serving as both a burden and support when it comes to education. More importantly, the inequities Chicano/Latino students must face on a daily basis in school, family, and society significantly impact their academic success.

Internal Factors

In this section, the co-researchers engaged with research question 2 – What internal factors do Chicano/Latino students perceive as determinants of academic success/failure? – and with research question 3 – What motivates Chicano/Latino students to succeed?

By exploring the external factors, the co-researchers built collective community awareness, questioned their situations, and became the creators of their own action plan and recommendations for the Chicano/Latino community. As individuals, each co-researcher also

moved through a simultaneous internal process in which they were able to identify three internal growth factors: (a) the internal conflict (b) the internal discoveries (these findings in response to research question 2) and (c) their internal motivation (this finding in response to research question 3) as they continued to face *el choque*.

In this section, I will report on the internal factors and how they have affected the co-researchers' academic success. I am defining internal conflict as the result of the messages the co-researchers as individuals had internalized from school, family, and society. The internal discoveries emerged when the co-researchers were able to understand and recognize their internal conflict. This led to their internal motivation.

The internal seeking of answers from within revealed to the co-researchers that this is where they develop voice, and their consciousness was heightened. Fundamentally, the co-researchers discovered that the shifts through each external factor were liberating – as these shifts helped them to discover their conflict – and led to motivation. The internal motivation is defined as the place where the co-researchers name the situations in their lives that were motivating them to succeed. This experience of the internal motivation enabled the co-researchers to create change based on the paradigm shift that occurred within them.

The finding that emerged here as I followed these co-researchers through their engagement with their internal conflict, discoveries, and motivation, was the constant presence of *el choque*.

The Internal Conflict. All the co-researchers reported that they realized that they had internalized the many messages from the educational, familial, and societal pressures placed upon them. These messages created an inner turmoil in their lives. They also added that they were not completely aware of why they were at this place. As they reflected on this convergence

of pressures, they explained how various aspects of the expectations from school, family, and society had affected their academic success. At this point in the process, the co-researchers were beginning to approach a better understanding of *el choque*.

Cuatlicue reflected,

Por el hecho que tienes que estar viviendo dos vidas en una sola. Aquí me enfrento a los... ahora sí que a los racismos y de todo un poco... que no entiendes el Inglés, que no te entienden, que tienes problemas económicos y tienes que buscar una solución.

[The simple fact that you are living two lives in one. Here I have faced racism with a little of everything. Like you don't understand English, or they don't understand you, or you have money problems, but you have to find a solution.]

Tonantzín added that she held her feelings in, expressing that “I just have this whole anger and rage in myself.” Collectively, the co-researchers identified layered levels of incongruencies relating to their feelings and behaviors. These incongruencies left them feeling split apart internally. One co-researcher, Zapata, blamed this split on a lack of their own consciousness, concluding that, “the problem is within us, because if we don't know that we are oppressed then how are we going to be able to fight the injustices.” These comments reflect the co-researchers collectively sifting through their internal conflicts.

The co-researchers shared a number of experiences that revealed their sense of powerlessness and oppression. They interpreted these feelings as directly resulting from the internalized messages that tainted the ways they thought and felt about themselves. Repeatedly, the co-researchers shared messages they had internalized from their school, family, and societal experiences. They expressed not fitting in, and yet, convinced themselves that in order to be accepted in society they must behave in a certain way. They reported that freedom had a price; it required them to give up a part of themselves. These messages had convinced the co-researchers that oppression was outside their power to change.

Cuatlicue shared her pained experience of not being accepted because she speaks English with a heavy accent:

Por ejemplo en mi caso es el lenguaje. No sé hablar muy bien el Inglés. Y hay gente que siempre me dice,- sabes? No te entiendo! Yo veo que no solamente hay racismo por parte de los blancos, sinó por parte del mismo grupo étnico. No sé cómo si tu tienes la oportunidad de salir adelante, vienen más Latinos y gente y con sus hechos te dicen sabes que yo no quiero que subas! Quedate aquí y siempre te ponen abajo y tartan de que no sigas adelante.

[For example, in my case it is the language. I don't speak English, well. And there are people that always tell me "you know what I don't understand you. I see that it is not just racism from Whites but also from the same ethnic group. I don't know why if you have the opportunity to succeed why do other people come with their actions they tell you I don't want you to succeed. They want you to stay in the same place and they put you down and they discourage you from moving forward.]

As the co-researchers undergo the PAR process, they are simultaneously confronted by the internalized messages that have impacted them and are constantly emerging again as a signifier of *el choque*. Their comments at this stage reflect their internal conflict and the demands placed on them by family, school and society to conform to a mold others define for them that is in direct conflict with who they are. One co-researcher gives an example of his experience that reflects this direct conflict in which he was targeted because of his appearance. In his community, he explained that being profiled or targeted in this way was normal practice and was experienced by many of his friends. Marcos asserted that "I look like a gangbanger, I used to have friends who looked like that too, I got pulled over three times in one week." At home, he also faced this struggle. His parents put down his appearance. Marcos continued and explained that, "at home my parents criticize my hair. They tell me "te miras como un marijuano, te miras como esto y otro," they just don't know." [You look like a pot-head, you look like this and that.] Marcos added that, "la libertad es sólo para las personas que actúan como todos los demás es lo que da libertad!" [Freedom is only for people who act like everyone else; that is

what gives you freedom.] This comment reflected the extent to which Marcos had internalized the message that to be free one must conform to others' imposed expectations.

Some co-researchers questioned this conclusion. They reported that, when they do not ask questions or challenge these messages, they are excluded from the process of their own self-definition and merely exist. For example, Zapata asserted angrily and shared his frustration:

The problem is us, because we are not really trying to educate ourselves and find or go to the root of the problem. We are just letting it happen, so it's actually our fault because all the education system is doing is just maintaining us by caging us up. We are like animals that don't try to escape; you know, we are just there living. They do it more to us because we don't fit in their American culture.

The co-researchers noted that being suspended between the two worlds of their school and family life deeply impacted their self-esteem. More than half of them also reported that their immigration status was another reality they faced within society. One co-researcher noted that he had internalized the anti-immigrant sentiment, and instead of being outraged, he personalized it, becoming ashamed of his undocumented status because it was a label that excluded him from obtaining the support that he needed for college. Also, being undocumented affected his self-esteem and did not allow him to express himself in his daily life. Zapata reported his general apprehension regarding this situation: "as an AB 540 student, I am ashamed to let anyone know that I am undocumented. I get by because I speak the [English] language well. But there is no way that I will tell a teacher." The value judgments associated with undocumented status, which were commonly internalized by Chicano/Latino students, contributed to their internal conflicts.

In addition to their feelings regarding undocumented status, Chicano/Latino students also often reported feeling conflicted regarding proscribed gender roles. This confluence of factors had the effect of undermining the Chicano/Latino students' sense of self. Gendered cultural messages from school, family, and society demonstrate the lack of support students feel,

affecting them emotionally. Unconditional support was critical to the academic success of Chicano/Latino students.

Frida shared that,

Mi familia tiene unas ideas muy diferentes a las mías. Por ejemplo en lo de la escuela, mi papá no muestra simpatía a lo que yo quiero hacer. No más me dice pongaseme a trabajar. Eso me deprime y me baja la auto estima.

[My family has some ideas that are very different than mine. For example, when it comes to my schooling, my father does not show any sympathy for what I want to do. He just tells me to go to work. That depresses me and lowers my self-esteem.]

The significance of these internalized messages is that through them, students become their own oppressors. The conflicts created by these messages as they are internalized lower students' self-esteem by compromising their engagement in their own self-definition.

The co-researchers recommended that to provide avenues for building self-esteem, the opportunity to engage in PAR should be made available to more Chicano/Latino students. They concluded that the PAR process revealed the constant re-iteration of the cultural collision – also known as *el choque* (although they did not necessarily call it that yet) – between school, family, and society. Not only this, but PAR provided the opportunity for delving deeper into *el choque*. Recognizing how they responded in the face of this was fundamental to knowing that they could do something about the problem. Through this experience, the co-researchers reported being able to recognize, understand, and identify their inner conflict; this understanding led to their internal discoveries.

The Internal Discoveries. The co-researchers reported that understanding the internalized messages helped them to recognize why they were in inner turmoil. Their growing awareness and subsequent identification of their internal conflict challenged them to look deeper within. This is where the messages they had internalized, and which had enhanced *el choque*,

were revealed. All the co-researchers reported having multiple discoveries from this process.

Understanding the conflict between the pressures of school, family, and society expanded their critical consciousness.

Frida noted that,

Como el conflicto, pero es que siento que eso lo que descubrí. Pienso aunque tengas o no tengas papeles de todos modos en la educación y a la vez abarca más general como de que es un choque de familia y de la educación.

[Like the conflict, but this is what I feel I discovered. I think that it doesn't matter whether you have papers (Legal immigration status) the most important general point in this is the conflict between the family and education.]

The co-researchers explained feeling empowered by their discoveries; these discoveries were two-fold – not only were they related to their personal experiences but also acknowledged the empowerment potential of the PAR process. Marcos added that, “this process is good because you can bring any question into the discussion and someone could just add on to the question or comment.”

Cuatlicue concurred and added,

Yo pienso que todos los problemas que se ven reflejados en los papás es como un desahogo para nosotros pero nos afecta a nosotros los estudiantes. Reconocer lo negativo nos ayuda para que empecemos a cambiar poco a poco. Entonces todo esto ayuda para salir adelante.

[I think that all the problems that are reflected upon the parents is a way to release for us, which also affects us as students. Also recognizing the negative helps to begin to change little by little. So then all this helps so that we can move forward.]

The discoveries expanded even beyond the immediate experiences of the co-researchers and the space created by the PAR process. For instance, many of the co-researchers reported that a newfound sense of feeling free (after beginning to understand their parents' issues) was clearly a benefit from their transformative experiences in PAR. The co-researchers were reassured to know that others were facing the same issues within the group. Itzel explained that, “this

experience in the group has made me [her] realize, that other people are in my same situation. This helps me [her] not to have fear. Just to know that Zapata and Frida are AB 540, I don't feel alone anymore." Individually, the co-researchers discovered particular elements of their own conflict; collectively, these discoveries brought a cohesive sense of solidarity.

This sense of community enabled a paradigm shift in the consciousness of the co-researchers, inviting the opportunity to examine their cultural attitudes regarding postponing things that can be done today, for tomorrow. The co-researchers agreed that Chicanos/Latinos should not leave matters for tomorrow, that it was important to obtain an education in order to advocate for themselves and others more effectively. One co-researcher shared her cultural insight, pointing to the displacement of education as a priority in favor of the needs of the family or survival.

Cuatlicue explained,

Si no estamos educados y tenemos siempre la costumbre de que mañana, mañana lo voy hacer, después siempre lo dejamos. No tenemos esa educación de por lo menos motivarnos y decir: Bueno, ¿qué es lo que estamos haciendo? No estamos educados para decir podemos hacerlo ahorita.

[If we are not educated and we have the habit of waiting until tomorrow, tomorrow I will do it but we forget about it. We don't have the preparation to at least motivate ourselves to say, good what are we doing? We are not preparing ourselves to say we can do it now.]

Marcos also shared his discovery of how he was caught in the middle of this dilemma, and how his pre-occupation with survival consistently postpones his education for tomorrow. He reported struggling with meeting his work obligations to help the family and doing exactly what Cuatlicue reported on:

It is simple. If I have 10 pages to read in my English book, I will say I will read right after I get home from work like at midnight. But then I am so tired that I just pass out and figure that I can read it in the morning. But I wake up late, we do a lot of things rushed or we say tomorrow.

As they continued to make discoveries, the co-researchers concluded that their attitude and behaviors were all important and that everything is connected. Tonantzín stated that she had discovered her conflict. She initially explained, “I am only seeing the family and cultural factors because that is pretty much what I am having an issue with.” However, she also added that, “[she] I realized that everything is all connected. It’s not just one part of one issue or the other; it is all connected together like a puzzle.” Being able to not only identify the conflict in their lives but also to understand its magnitude was essential for the co-researchers. They began to see the bigger picture from their experiences and to interpret their cultural and family traditions.

The co-researchers’ personal discoveries demonstrated their vulnerability and openness to learn and grow from this experience. Cuatlicue discovered her fear as she discovered how to reflect. She stated, “como que la cultura aquí te mete el miedo y te dice que tú estás mal. Como cuando aciertas algo, ya sabemos el problema. Ya sabes el punto sabes lo que está adelante y atrás.” [Like the culture here [in the U.S.] instills fear in you and it tells you that you are wrong. Like when you assert something you know the problem. You know the point front and back.] Zapata agreed and added that through PAR he had discovered that, “we are better analyzers, fue como un [it was like an] epiphany or un [a] metanoa. I believe it was a metamorphosis.” This internal search guided the co-researchers to develop voice as they experienced heightened consciousness. More significantly, this is where they became liberated. They further reported feeling empowered to advocate for themselves as well as others. These internal discoveries led them to find their internal motivation, which in turn helped them continue on their paths and not give up on their dreams.

The Internal Motivation. The co-researchers responded to research question 3 - What motivates Chicano/Latino students to succeed? - with the following insights. All the co-

researchers reported having different situations in their lives that motivated them to continue on their educational journeys. They reported that, as they better understood the conflict, they were able to shift to their personal internal discoveries. This, in turn, led to a more profound unveiling of the situations in their lives and motivated them to succeed. The internal motivations emerged once the co-researchers shifted from their internal discoveries as they developed voice and consciousness, and underwent a metamorphosis. The naming of their internal motivations is what kept them inspired as they continued to face educational, familial, and societal challenges.

Each co-researcher reported having a different situation motivating him or her to move forward. Some of them shared that their community and family pushed them to continue, whether by modeling positive or negative behavior or outcomes. Cuatlicue explained, “yo pienso que también es parte de todo lo que estamos viviendo. Esto nos hace descubrir que nosotros podemos. Mi comunidad y familia me impulsa a seguir con mi educación.” [I think that this is part of everything we are living. This makes us discover that we can do it. My community and family propel me to continue with my education.] Another co-researcher agreed that her motivation also came from someone in her family. Frida asserted, “mi mamá ha sido mi inspiración y por eso quiero continuar, porque yo sé que hizo sacrificios al venir aquí y pues quiero que valga.” [My mother has been my inspiration. This is why I want to continue, because I know that she made a lot of sacrifices to come here and I want it to count.]

Another co-researcher agreed with Cuatlicue and Frida, but felt that sometimes the motivation comes from a negative situation within their families. Sadly, one co-researcher shared that it was the lack of role models within her own family that motivated her to stay in college.

Esperanza explained,

I am the middle child. My older sisters live at home. One just moved back in for the third time. They have a lot of drama in their lives. One of my sisters is in a domestically violent relationship. That is my motivation because I don't want to end up like them.

Marcos also agreed with Esperanza and explained that sometimes what motivated him positively was initially negative, but that through these experiences he had learned to understand the challenges his father faced. He shared that seeing how hard the men in his family work consistently motivated him to stay in college.

Marcos stated,

Como dicen, es que para nosotros tiene que ser la familia porque todos los que estamos aquí somos de padres inmigrantes. [Like they say for us it has to be our family because all of us here are from immigrant parents.] When my dad came he started working in the factories. He has worked in the glass factory in Hayward and pipe factories in Oakland, now he is a construction worker. The thing is we all see how working in the industry is hard on our fathers and on our families. So for me the inspiration is to try to get an education to get a job where I can change things for people like our parents who are immigrants.

Alongside family, immigration status also played a major role. At least these two co-researchers, Marcos and Zapata, identified either the immigration status of themselves or their parents as a motivator. Zapata explained, regarding his education, “being undocumented motivated me to continue, because it is the only way to get up the ladder.” The other co-researchers, both undocumented and not, identified different motivations. Tonantzin noted that her motivation comes from “the whole family and traditional roles.” The final co-researcher, Itzel, stated that family does influence, but her motivation came from her own desire to be a role model to her younger sibling:

The one thing that motivates me is myself, because if I didn't find the motivation within me, I would be like any other Mexican girl pregnant or dropping out of school. But since I know what I am capable of doing. I want to go forward and finish what I started and be a role model to my sister.

This experience of the internal motivation enabled the co-researchers to create change based on a paradigm shift that occurred within.

Summary of internal factors

In conclusion, the internal factors of conflict, discovery, and motivation are a direct result of the processes of the external factors of school, family, and society. As the co-researchers shifted through the external and then the internal factors, they consistently unearthed the messages they had internalized from the external factors. Despite being products of the external factors of school, family, and society, the internal factors of conflict, discoveries, and motivation occurred almost simultaneously within the co-researchers. The internal factors are particularly significant because they aided the co-researchers in their community awareness, questioning, and creation. Understanding the three internal factors of conflict, discoveries, and motivation created the catalyst for a paradigm shift in the co-researchers' experience of *el choque*.

The co-researchers reported that they discovered that both negative and positive experiences had ignited their motivation. Overall, they reported more positive results from the internal process. They clarified the benefits of how the discovery of the conflict affected them. The discovery of their internal conflict allowed the co-researchers to recognize that they had internalized the messages from educational, familial, and societal pressures; this in turn had an effect on their self-esteem and academic success.

El Choque

In this section of *el choque*, I will discuss the following: education and society, gender disparity and shattered American dreams. I will then discuss how race and class play a major role within education and society. Chicana/Latina individuals are also specifically affected culturally by gender role disparities in school, family and society that exacerbate *el choque*.

Finally, I will include the untold truth of how the societal label of being AB 540 undocumented shatters American dreams. *El choque* is a cultural collision. As individuals navigating life, we live within different systems that have different values that conflict: for example, the institution of school, the institution of family, and the institution of greater society. The co-researchers identified these three institutions as major external factors that impacted their educational paths. Although the co-researchers did not identify *el choque* as a factor when engaging with the research questions, it was their collective data in the PAR process that pointed to the centrality of *el choque* throughout the co-researchers' experiences within school, family, and society. The individual standing in the intersection of these three value systems is standing in *el choque*, surrounded by the inner borderlands. Zapata asserted that everyone had demands, "todos tienen expectativas. [Everyone has expectations] the education system and the family clash. It's a culture clash!" This collision can also be seen ethnically – one who is identified as a Mexican, but born an American, and who also has indigenous roots, is also standing in *el choque*.

An individual experiences *el choque* as a constant underlying conflict. While this conflict can hold someone back, it can also be the motivation for individuals to pursue their dreams. The co-researchers did not use the language of *el choque* when discussing their inner conflicts; however, they shared examples that illustrated the consistent underlying presence of *el choque* in their lives. An examination of AB 540 status as a recurring theme in the co-researchers' lives provides a key illustration of the ways in which school, family, and society pressures fundamentally collided.

Gender Disparity: Females. Although the expectations related to mixed messages from the family, role reversal, and birth order created stress for all the co-researchers who reported on it, the female co-researchers also partially reported on the cultural expectations concerning their

gender. It was clear from the co-researchers' discussion of gender roles that the roles for the young women exacerbated *el choque*. Chicanas/Latinas dealt with community demands, cultural demands, and additional deficit messages due to their gender. When they upheld their proscribed roles at home, these roles often affected their academic advancement. However, the female co-researchers did not identify this added stress placed on them; they tended to play down the extent of it. The particular way in which Chicanas/Latinas were marginalized meant they were often more able to identify the male stresses related to the environment and gender roles more explicitly than their own, even when reporting on their own experience; even through their participation in this study, the female co-researchers tended to keep themselves in the shadows of their own reported reality. The expectation for women was not only that they would comply but that they would do so in silence. The internalization of this pressure produced constant emotions within the women - frustration, anger, rage, and the desire to rebel.

Another stress not clearly identified by the Chicana/Latina co-researchers is the cultural struggle they are confronted with between the pervasive but often unacknowledged pressure to model their mothers' behaviors and their own desire to realize themselves as individuals. This struggle requires Chicanas/Latinas to fulfill their gender role first and place their individual dreams last; the pressures they face impinge on their ability to grapple with balancing where and when it is acceptable to be an individual. While these co-researchers reported having different responses to the imposition of these roles, ranging from complying to questioning, they all reported on the internal struggle that accompanied these decisions.

Cuatlicue noted that "for the woman, hay muchas [there are lots of] expectations, to work, to be at home, once you get married you leave out education." Balancing the cultural expectations affected Chicanas'/Latinas' ability to do well in college. For example, Esperanza

had all the intention to fulfill her educational responsibilities, but once she was home her priorities were re-directed to meet the cultural expectation as a female at home.

She struggled and shared that:

There are a lot of expectations at home. If you don't do the chores you are not doing anything in life or you're just being lazy. I try to tell my mom I need to read my book and do my homework. She would say "no you have to do this first you have to clean the house. It's [the house] supposed to be clean because there are a lot of women in the house."

Tonantzín also shared her family experience:

Cuando yo cumplí dieciocho años me empearon a decir ya te vas a buscar un fulano. Pero mi papá es serio y me dice no tienes que casarte. Te tienes que tomar tu tiempo. Y mi mamá me dice cuando me vas a dar mis nietos. Y yo le digo, ¿que nietos? Yo me quiero esperar para buscar a la persona que yo quiero amar.

[When I turned eighteen years old they [my parents] started to tell me to look for someone. My father is a serious man and he tells me to wait [to have sex] before I get married. But my mother tells me, when are you going to give me grandchildren? I tell her what! Grand children, I want to wait to look for a person that I will love.]

Aside from dealing with the cultural and familial expectations, Chicanas/Latinas face other demands that dictate how they should look and behave. Both Itzel and Tonantzín connected the pressures to conform to an ideal cultural female image with the pressures to conform to model feminine behavior. Itzel asserted that within society, "the pressures for females are different. If you're a girl you go to school and you are supposed to look good. I don't want to call it ignorance but the girls are taught to depend on the men." This observation shows how the underlying cultural expectation to look good operates at the forefront of female dependence on men.

Tonantzín noted the following,

I don't know how to say this...I have to follow my parents' choices and sometimes I don't want to, I'd rather rebel. This is getting personal, for example if I ever plan to get married I don't want to live unhappy where I have to follow the whole same rules that a

woman shouldn't say anything and a man can do whatever, he wants. I don't like that, seriously.

Here, Tonantzín demonstrated her internal struggle with compromising herself in accepting the imposition of demands from her mother. Tonantzín reported that her mother strongly disapproved of her dress code because it resembled male attire. Tonantzín stated, “my mom said, *así no se visten las mujeres, así es como se ven los hombres, te tienes que mirar más como mujersita. Tienes que cuidar tu imagen.*” [Women do not dress like that... that is how the men dress. You have to look more like a young lady. You have to take care of your image.]” These experiences of Tonantzín demonstrated that cultural expectations within the family transcended behavior at home to also delimit female presentation within the greater society.

The female co-researchers reported on their own frustrations with the cultural expectations imposed on them through reporting specific behaviors they observed in their mothers. They expressed anger because of their mother's modeled behaviors that perpetuate the cultural expectations for how Chicana/Latina women are supposed to be – submissive and silent. The co-researchers revealed internalized oppression, anger, and rage as well as the desire to be different in reaction to their mother's modeled behaviors but reported often opting to remain silent in their daily lives because it was required by their gender role. This expectation of silence had the effect of stagnating these co-researchers' internal progress by disallowing them to learn to advocate for themselves in society. Frida shared, “*mi mamá como que ha sido de esas mujeres humiliditas que no le importa lo que diga el hombre. Me llena de rabia y me da coraje que mi mamá se calle.*” [My mom has been one of those humble women who doesn't care what the man says. This makes me angry and full of rage that my mom stays quiet.] Tonantzín added how she would like to rebel and break her silence as a Chicana/Latina woman, stating: “Women are tired of being told what to do by men. Also, for me (her) I am sick and tired of being gentle

and quiet. Sometimes I just want to be tough, and I can't because I am a woman." These are some examples of the behaviors modeled by the co-researchers' mothers that daughters emulate but struggle with.

The gender role expectation for the Chicana/Latina creates insurmountable stress through internalized oppression. The female co-researchers in this study expressed and described the imposition of the cultural roles that implicated them based on gender. It is the distortion – required by this host of pressures – of the individual paradigm that can make the Chicana/Latina lose her identity and integrity as an individual woman. For these reasons, gender roles affected Chicanas/Latinas psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. While gender is not the only factor to contribute to *el choque*, it proved a significant one especially for the female co-researchers. The cultural demands produced a significant gender disparity that exacerbated the Chicana/Latina struggle for self-definition by subjecting them to experience additional pressure and stress.

While gender disparities impacted the Chicana/Latina co-researchers significantly, the co-researchers also reported how the more general inequities posed by class and race reveal the depth of the challenges that Chicanos/Latinos continue to face due to their or their families' AB 540 undocumented status.

Education and Society: AB 540 Undocumented. The co-researchers' discussions of how AB 540 status affected them, their families, and their community provides a clear case study of how labels created for Chicano/Latino students in school and society exclude them from paths through which they could access tools that will support them in navigating life successfully. Their reported experiences of this label not only expose some of the underpinnings of the racism they were subject to, but also the *choque* they lived with as a result of their particular societal

status. The co-researchers reported that due to the lack of college preparation, they only learned about the implications of their legal status when they sought to obtain financial aid services at the community college. They were advised by the community college that their status made them ineligible for financial aid assistance. Throughout their experiences in K-12, the co-researchers reported that they were never informed of the challenges Chicano/Latino students face if they are undocumented. All the co-researchers except for one did not receive financial aid because of either their AB 540 status or their parents' lack of knowledge of the financial aid system. Zapata added that, "it is the same for undocumented students; if you don't have money, you don't have privilege and you are always afraid of stuff. You don't know if your education will really count."

Of the co-researchers, three were AB 540 or considered undocumented. Four of them were U.S. citizens. Since their parents did not speak English or did not understand how financial aid worked, they were not able to receive financial aid assistance. The only one receiving financial aid was a legal resident who had been born in Mexico. Although the first generation students could possibly qualify for financial aid, both the co-researchers and their parents lacked the understanding of the financial aid process, which is normally completed a year ahead of time before entering college or the university.

Cuatlicue described that,

Para los Latinos el system educative trabaja de distintas maneras y mejor con personas que han vivido aquí toda su vida. Trabaja mejor para los blancos, los Latinos siempre sufren esa discriminación porque tienen otra cultura, no tienen resources, no hay dinero o no hay trabajo.

[For Latinos the education system works in different ways and better for persons who have lived here all their life. It works better for Whites, the Latinos always suffer discrimination because they have another culture, they don't have resources they have no money and no job.]

Most importantly, the co-researchers realized that change does not occur until people know what they are confronting in their lives. They concluded that there were barriers in the education system as well as in American society that exclude them and deny them access to the social structures they live within. They clearly described how their immigration status creates hopelessness in Chicano/Latino students.

The co-researchers with AB 540 status felt that being undocumented (AB 540) posed a major barrier for future generations of Chicano/Latino students and themselves. The significance of the undocumented issue is how American society continues to treat them. The undocumented co-researchers in this study felt that, because of their immigration status, they faced more challenges throughout their educational experiences. Moreover, the co-researchers added that AB 540 students who are in high school believe that they can go to college. However, they will be faced with the reality, once in college, that they are not eligible for financial aid assistance, regardless of what institution they decide to attend.

Zapata claimed that,

It is hard and frustrating to try and figure out how to meet the financial challenges undocumented students face, even when we have attended school in the U.S. all of our lives. The educational system is setting us up to fail and we have no options.

Only two of the co-researchers had parents born in the U.S. Four of the co-researchers (born in the U.S.) explained that, even though they were American citizens, their parents were undocumented or did not understand how the education system worked. Therefore, these co-researchers felt that they faced the same challenges as those who were undocumented. Two co-researchers in particular expressed how their parents' immigration status had affected them even though they were born in the U.S. Tonantzin affirmed that "parents with children born in the United States do not know how to find the money to pay for college." Esperanza stated, "I was

born here and people think, Oh! You should have everything easy but, it isn't. I come from a Mexican family who needs everything in Spanish so they can understand. From middle school, I was left on my own. I had to figure it out. You know it is still hard.” She continued, expressing that in her case, since when her parents had applied for financial aid for her sister some years ago she had not qualified, her parents assumed that she would not qualify to receive financial aid either. This affected her own decisions regarding her education:

I have not applied for financial aid because my sister applied and did not qualify. At first my dad's job would pay for my registration fees but then the economy went bad and the owner died. Now I am the one paying for my school.

Four of the co-researchers asserted that although they were U.S. citizens, they were still not receiving financial aid either because of their parents' lack of understanding of how financial aid worked or their language barrier. These co-researchers explained that, from their parents' experiences, they were also able to see the struggles they faced because their parents were undocumented. Yet, they recognized that they had some advantages over their parents. For example, all the co-researchers reported that while they were aware that completing high school in the United States and speaking English distinguished their social position from that of their parents, these tools had still not given them full access to resources. The three of the co-researchers who were AB 540 noted that it wasn't until they arrived in the community college system that they realized they would fall prey to injustices just like their parents.

Itzel shared a family experience,

My parents are scared of working with the wrong lawyer. One of my uncles was working with a lawyer, and he ended up being a fraud. And my dad is afraid to end up the same. I think that is why he does not want to get involved. I have told my dad to give me the access number so that I can follow up; then I think that everything would fall on me.

Employment was another injustice related to AB 540 status that co-researchers commented upon. Foreign-born co-researchers felt that the U.S.-born co-researchers had more

benefits. Although the undocumented parents are able to work in the U.S., they tend to get jobs that are hard labor jobs with the least pay.

Frida explained,

Cuando uno llega aquí como nosotros los indocumentados todos tienen esa visión de que en los estados unidos es la tierra de la oportunidad. Tal vez por el trabajo pero a la vez no es como un trabajo buenísimo porque los papás tienen que hacer un trabajo que los nacidos aquí o Americano no hacen. Entonces esa idea de la tierra de oportunidad, yo creo que no más aplica para ciertas personas para los que nacen aquí.

[When you arrive in this country, we – the undocumented – we all have that vision that the United States is the land of opportunity. Maybe it's because of employment, but at the same time it's not like it's the best jobs, because our parents have to do work that American citizens will not do. So the idea of the land of opportunity I believe only applies to certain individuals, those who are born here.]

The co-researchers felt that, even though their undocumented families were integrated in society, they were still faced with limited opportunities. Zapata shared that, “my dad works but he doesn't have papers and if they find out we worry. But he is tired of training people who are younger and get paid more money than him.”

Aside from economic struggle, the AB 540 co-researchers shared a common fear of being found out; this inherited fear carried through multiple generations. The co-researchers also expressed that having undocumented parents was an added burden aside from their own immigrant status. Frida, for example, shared that she worries about her father. She thinks of what would happen if he lost his job or if he was sent back to Mexico:

A mi papá lo pidió su patrón pero mi papá no ha hecho nada. Le da miedo que lo manden para cumplir su castigo. Y si él se va mi mamá no nos puede mantener con su sueldo no más. Yo siento que su miedo lo estanca. Y a la vez yo me fustro porque no veo que él se mueva para arreglar la situación.

[My father was sponsored to be in this country by his boss but my father has not done nothing. He is afraid that they might send him back as a punishment. If he goes my mom cannot maintain the household on her salary alone. I feel that his fear stagnates him. I get frustrated because I don't see that he has the initiative to do something about the situation.]

Another co-researcher, Esperanza, shared, from her own experience, another challenge that undocumented families often face – that of being split apart:

Like my sister she was born in Mexico. I didn't meet her until she was fifteen years old that was when she got her papers. I didn't grow up with her and I don't know but everything is different. It took her 15 years to get her papers.

Itzel also claimed that she worried about her personal situation of being undocumented. She reported that this situation was out of her control, because her parents were the ones who decided to bring her to the United States, but that it has impeded her progress.

She shared that “if they send me to Mexico I would be lost. I have been here all my life...Castigo porque? [Why punish me?] I didn't choose to come here. My parents brought me when I was little. Why is it my fault?”

Even though this co-researcher would like to continue her education, she is having a difficult time finding financial resources and because of her AB 540 status, sometimes questions if she will be able to continue to higher education.

Another co-researcher added that parents themselves need to get educated to better understand their children's experiences in college.

Esperanza shared that,

My parents don't know what it is to study. Or to try to do an essay and staying up late at night because that's the only time that it is quiet because everyone is asleep. So, my parents' lack of education has affected me but it also pushed me to continue.

Itzel explained that when she entered elementary school she lived an embarrassing moment which she still remembers to this day:

I remember in my first days of education in elementary school. Since I didn't speak the language I didn't know that I had to ask for permission to go to the bathroom to step out of class. My mom did not teach me how to ask for permission because she doesn't speak English. This put me in an uncomfortable position and I went [urinated] on myself.

Frida further reflected on the legacy aspect of this lack of parental understanding, adding that, “estamos pasando a las generaciones que vienen de Latinos. Es como una cadena que se sigue pasando de que no es importante la educación, que lo que importa es hacer dinero.” [We are passing it on to future Latino generations. It’s like a chain that continues happening that education is not important that what is more important is making money.] She observed the mindset that places material possessions and money as more important than education.

Frida explained,

La familia también sufre y todos se desesperan. En mi casa mi papá me a dicho que vinieron a los estados unidos pensando que tal vez trabajando pueden sacarme adelante. Pero todo te impacta, lo primero es el dinero, mueve el mundo, las clases y tu estatus como AB 540 indocumentada.

[The family also suffers and everyone gets frustrated. In my home my father has told me that they came to the United States thinking that by working they can get ahead. But everything impacts you. The first thing is money it moves the world, your classes and your undocumented status as an AB 540.]

The co-researchers added that those who come to this country attempt to find a solution to their situation. In their case, they all decided to go to college. Even then, the co-researchers found themselves feeling hopeless because of their undocumented status. They felt excluded from obtaining proper community services. They also faced difficulty finding employment because of their immigration status, as did their parents. The co-researchers felt that more Chicanos/Latinos will continue to live in poverty if they are not educated and are not prepared to take greater opportunities in society. They noted that until a fundamental paradigm shift occurs, American society can expect to see more poverty, violence, and an increase in the number of shattered American dreams.

Shattered American Dreams. The co-researchers felt that many people come to the U.S. to realize the American dream, a dream that differs for each individual; they also questioned this dream itself. Tonantzín asked: “Does the American dream still exist?” She added, “In my case, my parents came here for a better life and future.” Another co-researcher noted that there will always be individuals seeking the American dream. For some, individuals helping their families who live in other countries are accomplishing the American dream, since in their own countries they are sometimes not even able to work to provide the basic needs of life. Unlike Tonantzín, Cuatlicue did not question the existence of the dream, rather she illustrated how someone might interpret its content differently:

Yo creo que siempre va haber personas que vienen en busqueda del sueño Americano. Aún estando aquí tienen su sueño porque de una o otra manera poco a poco siguen aquí. No importa que estén trabajando en un restaurante o de albañil con que obtengan ese dinero que ayuda a su familia a mantenerse siguen. Porque si regresan a su país quien sabe si trabajen.

[I think that there will always be people who come in search of the American dream. Although being here they are having their dream. It doesn't matter that they are working in a restaurant or in construction, as long as they are able to make money to help their family survive they continue, because if they return to their country they might not work at all.]

On the other hand, another co-researcher felt that the American dream did not apply to Chicanos/Latinos at all. According to him, it is ingrained at a young age that owning property and having material possessions is the American dream. He disagreed and shared that, in fact, obtaining legal immigration status and becoming a U.S. citizen was his American dream.

Zapata argued,

Pero ese sueño Americano no aplica a nosotros. No nos aplica, [But that American dream does not apply to us. It doesn't apply] because we have over flooded this country. I don't think it applies to us because we are not even able to obtain the American dream. Supposedly buying your own home, paying it off, and having a retirement is the dream but some people don't get that at all. My American dream would be to get legalized here so that I can get a job.

Another co-researcher explained that each individual has his or her own American dream. Frida affirmed that, “the American dream differs from person to person, especially between parents and their children.” Sometimes, an individual will seek to fulfill his or her parents’ dream. Tonantzín stated that, “my parents have always told me that achieving my education is the American dream.” All the co-researchers agreed that each person has their own American dream with a particular vision of possibility. Marcos concluded that, in the end, “the American dream changes when people find out the reality.”

Zapata asserted,

Llegamos a este país para ir al colegio, [We come to this country to go to college.] you try to get help but you’re still not going to get a job, so you stop trying. You keep losing hope, you can’t even go to the hospital, you can’t drive, you can’t find jobs, it’s like you’re dead. You don’t exist in this country; you never existed. It’s like you are an invisible person; you’re a ghost.

This understanding awakens them to identifying their oppression within society that culminates in the incongruencies that prevent their full self-realization.

Summary of *El Choque*

El choque is pervasive in everyday life, and it is at least partially through gender disparity for females, AB 540 undocumented status, and shattered American dreams that we can see its consistency in how it affects Chicanos/Latinos. The co-researchers were locating their own inner borderlands – here are the triads of elements in collision in which they could clearly identify themselves: race, class, and gender; school, family, and society; body, spirit, and mind; psychological, spiritual, and emotional; Mexican, American, and Indigenous. In addition, they further reflected on how the label of AB540 undocumented affected them and their families. They looked at how culture played a role in divisive gender disparity. They also reflected on how the lack of education would continue to affect the Chicano/Latino family and society. The

discovery and naming of *el choque* produced even greater motivation than the experience of *el choque* itself had. This revelation accentuated *Nepantlá*; as the co-researchers began to discover this, they shifted into this middle space.

Nepantlá

One of my major findings was recognizing that the co-researchers were experiencing their *choque* as they understood their conflict, while simultaneously discovering the middle space of *Nepantlá*. The three categories within *Nepantlá* – Paradigm shift, Liberation, and Holistic Healing – are in practice embedded, respectively in the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom. Moving through these, simultaneously and circularly, one approaches *Nepantlá*, marked by the behavioral shift. Knowledge is not power until you use it; applied, it becomes not only power but wisdom. This moment of empowerment is where *Nepantlá* becomes the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom

Within the process, they identified the roots of these pressures and stresses openly, and began to shift to the middle space of *Nepantlá*. The co-researchers also reported that they had inherited historical and cultural responsibilities, responsibilities that were passed on by previous generations, with the expectation that they would fight for future generations without giving up or giving in. Frida reflected on a deeper level regarding the struggle Chicano/Latino students' experience:

Es como una cosa que es pasada de generación en generación. Como algo que se va aumentando con el tiempo. Y cuando llega a nuestra generación tenemos que pelear por toda la cadena que se a juntado y es difícil. A veces piensas que no vas ha acabar y mejor haces lo que tus papás quieren.

[It is like something that is passed from generation to generation. Like something that increases with time. When it has reached our generation we have to fight for all the other generations that were chained to us and this is difficult. Sometimes you think that you will not finish and you do what your parents want.]

Zapata asserted that,

Our parents don't really know the system. They really don't know how it works, so how are they going to expect us to know. We have to learn everything: the basics what to do, and how to get financial aid. They don't understand what we do at school. They sometimes don't understand that it is a lot of work. They feel it's a waste of time because we are not making money. Family really takes you away. They think that if you get educated maybe you will become like the oppressor.

As Frida's and Zapata's observations convey, the co-researchers identified and recognized that they were dealing with both past and present expectations. Ultimately, the co-researchers felt that they were fighting through their historical inheritance from previous generations and this, along with their parents' expectations, created greater pressure and stress in their lives. The expectation for the students to figure out what to integrate or how to manage their time both at school and home was overwhelming. In addition, the parents' lack of understanding of what students must deal with in school adds to the pressure already felt by the students.

Itzel asserted the following:

I am the oldest daughter and it is difficult for me. When I was involved in soccer my parents didn't give me enough time. They can't put themselves in my shoes because they have never been there. I personally don't want to let my culture go, I want to bring to the table what my culture has shown me but then it's kind of hard to balance myself between school and what my culture expects of me as a female.

While this quote reveals Itzel's experience of *choque*, it also illustrates her shift to *Nepantlá*; she is actively claiming what she wishes to keep from her culture and letting go of what she felt was creating additional setbacks. It is clear that these three co-researchers were all struggling with the lack of parental insight and the familial and cultural priorities of meeting survival needs. As they discussed and identified the roots of this pressure and stress openly, they began to shift into *Nepantlá*.

Gender Disparity: Males. While gender was a significant element of this struggle for all the co-researchers, the females tended to report more than the males on how gender shaped their experience of *el choque*, while the male reflections on gender roles tended to address more their experience of the middle space of *Nepantlá* and reflect the cultural conditioning to take the provider role. The male co-researchers reported that they were expected to acquire certain behaviors to exhibit within the Chicano/Latino culture. One co-researcher noted how in the Latino family, he was expected after a certain age to take on other responsibilities in order to assist the family unit. He realized that if he gave into the family expectation he would not be able to complete his educational goal.

Marcos claimed:

En las familias Latinas, después de cierta edad tiene una responsabilidad de hacer dinero. Mis padres me han dicho que haga un trabajo con beneficios, pero yo les digo “no puedo con la escuela y con un trabajo full-time, no voy a poder.”

[In Latino families after a certain age you have the responsibility to make money. My parents have told me to get a job with benefits, but I tell them that I can't do school and work full-time. I will not be able to do it.]

Frida added that the males have a responsibility to provide for the family, which is not always fair. She stated, “especialmente los hombres tienen el estrés de cumplir con la familia y lo típico de la cultura Latina es que te tienes que casar y hacer dinero para tu familia, y yo pienso que eso está mal.” [Especially the men have the stress to provide for the family. And what is typical in the Latino family is that you have to get married and make money for the family and I think that is not good.] In addition, Esperanza illustrated how the Chicano/Latino males face other societal challenges from their environment.

She stated,

It is hard to ignore your environment because you see people you grew up with and went to school with, but there is more pressure for the guys. They are pressured to be a man, to be tough and prove themselves then they get in trouble and it is hard to ignore.

Zapata explained that the male must demonstrate that he takes the lead. He added that their masculine internal strength is based on not showing emotions and taking care of others in the family, and expressed his discomfort with these expectations:

Tus padres te enseñan que eres un hombre y tienes que agarrar the lead. Tienes que ser el alpha, y tienes que ser el role model. [Your parents teach you that you are the man and you have to take the lead. You have to be the alpha male and role model.] For me I don't want to be the alpha male. I hide myself under, when everything happens because you have to be tough. I can't cry ever, I can't show emotions and I always have to be taking care or looking out for the women. I think they can take care of themselves.

Zapata here is distancing himself from his expected cultural role to be the provider and asserting his own self-definition independent of these expectations. Another co-researcher also discussed the cultural expectations to take the lead that are instilled in Chicano/Latino males at home. In some cases, the learned behaviors follow them into the classroom.

Marcos reflected on his behavior in the classroom:

I think the machismo thing also affects us in the classroom. Because if a male teacher tells me something I am like maybe he is wrong or maybe I am wrong but I'd rather not be told by another guy.

Zapata agreed with Marcos and reflected more in-depth on how machismo affects Chicano/Latino males' self-esteem. He explained how the cultural expectations were present in the students' life and how it was intangible. He stated:

I think that machismo really does bring your self-esteem down. It is crippling because it is something that you need to do but also something that cannot be reached. You can never touch it and you could never reach it or hold it. It's just there.

Nepantlá both does and does not happen all at once. While the researcher and co-researchers identified three clear phases – paradigm shift, liberation, and holistic healing – these phases unfolded almost simultaneously, requiring each other to come to fruition. In other words,

some level of both holistic healing and liberation was required in order for co-researchers to be fully present in a paradigm shift; and this ability to shift more fully brought about liberation, which culminates in holistic healing. These aspects of the process are all represented in moments of Phase IV of PAR.

Paradigm Shift. In this section, I will review the dialogue exchange that supported the collective analysis in Phase IV of the PAR process. The learnings that arose out of the PAR process illustrate the paradigm shift that occurred within the co-researchers. This process demonstrated the exchange of the dialogues while also honoring each of the co-researchers' voices. Within the collective analysis phase, the co-researchers along with the researcher participated in creating a safe environment where the co-researchers felt free to express themselves, validating their experiences within the process.

Feeling safe. All the co-researchers reported having a positive experience with the process. They felt comfortable enough that they trusted themselves to ask questions. Also, they felt that others were able to also share their thoughts and truths. Marcos stated that, "This process is good because you can bring any question into the discussion and someone could just add on to the question or comment." Another co-researcher, Zapata, agreed, adding, "I feel comfortable like I could say anything. I have fears but I am okay." Itzel agreed with Marcos and Zapata and expressed with excitement that for her, just knowing others who have lived similar experiences was good. She asserted that, "This experience—it was good to find out that there are other students with similar experiences." Aside from the personal connections within the group experience, the co-researchers identified the generative themes from the process. Cuatlicue explained that,

Lo principal es que todos tenemos en común y estamos compartiendo los mismos puntos. Son la familia, la economía, nuestras situaciones de vivir aquí en los estados unidos, la diferencia de cultura que tenemos en la casa y afuera de la casa.

[The main point is that we all have things in common and we are sharing the same points. Such as the family, the economy and our living situations in the United States, the difference of culture that we have in our home and outside of our home.]

More importantly, the co-researchers recognized that they were able to agree on the major themes that provided the common threads through their respective experiences. Within the process, there was a constant reciprocal exchange oriented toward validating the co-researchers' knowledge and contributions.

Validating the co-researchers within the process. Throughout the whole study I would check in with the co-researchers to verify their analysis. There were checks and balances from the beginning to the end of the process. This served as a constant reminder of how essential the co-researchers and their discoveries were, pushing them into a place of action, requiring them to bring about correlative changes in behavior that honored their attitude shifts. Validating the co-researchers' work at each phase and confirming that nothing was left out was also crucial. I began by explaining to the co-researchers that I would remind them of our joint collaboration in the process. I stated, "You are contributing to a whole community. It is not just about me; it's about all of us together collectively."

The co-researchers were guided repeatedly to review the transcriptions for possible changes. For example, early on in the confirmation process, I shared, "We are confirming generative themes and steps completed thus far and any feedback and/or changes. Vamos a hacer un repaso de los pasos que hemos tomado. Por favor saquen su paquete para poder repasar todo." [Let's review the steps that we have taken. Please take out your transcriptions so that we can review everything.]

On another occasion, I checked in regarding Phase IV of the process, requesting confirmation of the agreement with the co-researchers. I explained, “Este punto de análisis colectiva más que todo es que nosotros estamos de acuerdo. [The point of collective analysis is to clarify and notate that we are in agreement.]”

As the co-researchers finalized the last step within the process, I asked if there was anything left out and if their ideas and voices were captured, reaffirming, “Esto es parte del plan de acción, eso concluye como lo que ustedes han dicho en el grupo. Cualquier otra cosa que no está. Estoy captando todo.” [This is part of the action plan this concludes what you have said in the group. Is there something missing? Have I captured everything?.] I closed by thanking them for their support and commitment: I “Thank you all for doing the analysis with me. Do you have any questions?”

When the process was completed, the co-researchers shared that at the beginning they dreaded meeting every Saturday. They added that they had looked for excuses. Frida explained, “Al principio nos pasaba a Cuatlicue y a mí que nos decíamos, “Ay, ¿cada cuándo tenemos que venir (risas). ¡Ay todos los sábados! ¡Ay no! Como que tu creas tus propias excusas como “tengo tarea” pero siempre la terminamos.” [At the beginning, both Cuatlicue and I [Frida] we would tell ourselves how often do we have to meet (they laughed). What! Every Saturday? Oh no! Like you start to create your own excuses such as I have homework, but we always complete it.] But, by the end the co-researchers were glad they had participated in the study. The co-researchers were constantly asked to review and edit the data from the process for accuracy of their experiences and to ensure the inclusion of their voices. The structure of PAR, as it liberated the co-researchers, facilitated a paradigm shift.

Liberation: working together. The collective participation of the researcher and co-researchers in the process was crucial: I would emphasize, confirm and repeat what was agreed upon. Transcriptions were reviewed and edited by the co-researchers. Further, I notated the changes that were requested within these transcriptions. The co-researchers were guided at the different phases of the PAR process to review, clarify, and edit the group dialogues.

I stated,

Okay, so what I will do when I am typing the transcription is to try to capture everything and you are going to edit it. I will also think of a new question, but if there is something that you want to change we will change it okay? So I will take my last question out and I will rewrite one focused more on what Che is talking about. Do you all agree with that?.

In addition, certain action steps were taken to incorporate the changes requested by the co-researchers. I noted the following, “I will work on changing question number three based on the group’s recommendation.” Furthermore, listening to the co-researchers was also critical as they provided feedback.

Tonantzín asserted,

I want to change this on the transcript[ion]. Can I? I don’t remember saying this. As the guide I responded, “Yes, it’s not a problem. Put a line through it. I want to remind all of you that if something does not sound right, you can change it.”

Another co-researcher made mention of some of the generative themes as he reviewed the transcriptions. Zapata explained, “When I was looking through the transcript[ion], I actually saw that one of the biggest problems is family and culture.” As the co-researchers identified different aspects of the process it was important to validate them and the work they were accomplishing together. This reflexivity of the researcher assisted with the co-researchers’ liberation by incorporating the changes and ideas that they had. Seeing this validated and enabled the co-researchers to trust the process and let go.

Holistic healing: trusting the process. At the beginning of the process, the co-researchers were shy and unsure of what to share with the group. One co-researcher wanted to make sure that she could share things in private. Tonantzín stated, “I don’t want to say something offensive but if a person has something very personal and they just don’t want to discuss it with the other co-researchers of the group, do we have to share?” The co-researchers were encouraged to share what was comfortable for them. I guided the co-researchers with: “If something doesn’t feel right or you don’t want to share it, part of what we just discussed is that you do not have to.” On the other hand, as the co-researchers became involved they were more eager to make statements. For example, at one point in the process a co-researcher became excited about the topic of discussion and interjected. Zapata stated, “I want to say something really quickly now that we are talking about stereotypes and the education system.”

Within the group process, if the co-researchers became quiet I would ask them questions to re-engage them. At one point, I asked, “Tonantzín, would you like to share?” She responded, “No, I am just listening and thinking.” Although the co-researchers shared their thoughts, they were always reminded after the group process if they had questions to write them down so they would not forget them. I noted, “We will see each other next Saturday, same time, is there anything else? Remember, si tienen preguntas [If you have questions] write them down; it doesn’t matter what it is?” It was important that I as a researcher validated and honored the co-researchers’ spiritual space for their own development and growth so they would feel safe enough to speak without revising or editing their own thoughts beforehand. Through their building of community awareness, community questioning, and community creation, the co-researchers demonstrated their shift from *el choque* to *Nepantlá*. In *Nepantlá*, they reveal their

process that brought them to this paradigm shift. The shift was validated by the their community action plan that they developed collectively.

Community Creation. As the co-researchers became aware of their experiences, they began to question their circumstances, but more importantly through this process they exemplified what they had learned and how they had applied the knowledge. This led to the community creation. In community creation, I along with the co-researchers determined and developed an action plan that fulfilled phase five of the PAR process. Following in this section are the co-researchers' recommendations within this action plan; all these recommendations are based on 100% consensus from the co-researchers. My final recommendations, which take into account the implications of the entire study, will be listed in chapter 5. According to the co-researchers, identifying and discussing the problems was just one part of the process. It was more important to them to find tangible solutions to increase the academic success of Chicano/Latino students.

Cuatlicue asserted, “en relación de todo esto que estamos hablando. Hablamos de los problemas y los motivos pero nunca de una solución, pero si todos nos unimos podemos salir adelante.” [In relation to everything that we are discussing, we talk about the problems and the reasons but we never [talk] about the solution, but if we all come together we can forge ahead.] This act of shared questioning proved the segue to bringing the community together to create positive solutions they determined could meet the needs of Chicano/Latino students. Given the opportunity, Chicano/Latinos can create and learn. As community creators they developed a community action plan. This action plan demonstrates their collective shift to *Nepantlá* as they became active participants in their own education and in providing an equitable solution to the injustices that their community faces.

Co-researchers' action plan recommendations. The co-researchers agreed on the following eight recommendations: 1) educating Chicano/Latino parents regarding the community college system, 2) providing information and workshops in Spanish at the K-12 and the community college, and higher education, 3) providing more in-depth workshops regarding financial resources/options in English and Spanish, 4) extending the Puente Program to be a two-year commitment and expanding it to serve more Chicano/Latino students, 5) improving campus academic and student services, 6) creating a Peer Advising group for Chicano/Latino students in English and Spanish, 7) developing a Student Organization that will focus on these recommendations, and 8) implementing and providing Campus Legal Services connected to community based organizations in English and Spanish for students.

Recommendation 1: Educating Chicano/Latino parents regarding community college.

The co-researchers recommended that a process to educate parents about the community college system be created and implemented to recruit and retain more Chicano/Latino students. The co-researchers felt that, if parents understood the process, then they would be better equipped to help their families with their academic goals.

Cuatlicue suggested,

Hace falta un balance, para seguir adelante, también falta una escuela para padres. También los padres si quieren que sus hijos sigan adelante pero no hay información no saben para dónde ir porque no hablan inglés o porque ir está muy lejos, hace falta que los padres se eduquen para que busquen diferentes maneras para poder educar a sus hijos.

[We need a balance to continue, and we need a school for our parents. Also, if parents want their children to continue but there is no information, or they don't know because they don't speak English or because it is too far, parents need to get educated and find different ways to educate their children.]

The co-researchers added that specific services should be provided to meet the various needs of the students and parents, as early as kindergarten.

Zapata noted,

They need to open a College Evening Center for workshops a) so that it helps parents understand what students are going through, b) provide help for completion of forms and c) more information on classes. This needs to start at the lowest level from kindergarten.

Recommendation 2: Provide information and workshops in Spanish at the K-12 and community college levels.

The co-researchers added that providing language appropriate information as early on as possible at the K-12 level is critical so that Chicano/Latino students do not continue to face the same challenges they have faced. A co-researcher discussed a solution to help others like herself who are closer to the college level.

Frida asserted,

Yo recomiendo que hagamos workshops en Español para una high school sobre AB 540 y Financial aid. Pero también sería importante hacer los workshops para educar a nuestros padres y otros padres Latinos de nuestro colegio para que entiendan la información y les ayuden a sus hijos.

[I recommend that we do workshops in Spanish for high schools about AB 540 and financial aid. But it is important to do workshops to educate our parents and other Latino parents of our college so they can understand the information and then they can help their children.]

Not only is information important for the children in K-12, but the co-researchers noted that community college students also need workshops and services in Spanish. Itzel shared, “una orientación en español para padres y estudiantes Latinos, después de la orientación ya viene los workshops de financial aid en español para llenar el Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).” [An orientation in Spanish for the Chicano/Latino parents and students, after the orientation then there should be workshops for financial aid in Spanish to complete the FAFSA.]

Recommendation 3: Financial aid, scholarships, and resources.

The co-researchers recommended that more financial resources be made available to assist Chicano/Latino students. In addition, they recommended that workshops be provided for both the parents and the students in English and Spanish. Esperanza shared, “I think there should be more help with financial aid.” Another co-researcher asserted that more hands on teaching needs to happen. Marcos stated, “We also need workshops that will teach students how to complete financial aid forms.” Students need help, but Chicano/Latino parents also need the information in the language that they can understand. They also need to be taught how to complete the documents for their children’s education. Tonantzín added that, “we need financial aid workshops for parents in Spanish, especially since they have to complete the forms.” Finally, more scholarship services are needed to represent more majors in college. Cuatlicue, an art major, claimed that, “a lot of scholarships are only for particular majors such as business, accounting, medicine, engineering mainly the sciences. The sad part is that, even though I find scholarships, very few to none are for my major.”

Recommendation 4: Expand and extend the Puente Program.

The co-researchers recommended that the Puente Program be expanded and extended. They specifically noted that the Puente Program needs to include mathematics, not just English. Frida, noted the following, “el plan que otros colegios explican e incluyen la matemática ya es como otros programas ya es como empujan al estudiante otro poquito. Porque dependiendo del nivel de matemática en que tú vas. Porque aquí [Puente] nomás te requieren el Inglés.” [The plan that other colleges have includes math just like other programs. That would be like pushing the student forward a little. Depending on the level of math that you are in, because here (Puente) only requires English.]

Although the Puente program has been successful in helping Chicano/Latino students, the co-researchers felt that more programs like Puente are needed to serve the demand. Also, they felt that programs should incorporate motivating Chicano/Latino students and teaching them how to navigate in college early on. Tonantzín shared, “yo pienso que programas que motivan a los Latinos sería mucha ayuda.” [I think that programs that motivate Latinos would be a lot of help.] Cuatlicue explained, “cuando yo entré el primer semestre no sabía que hacer, ni que clases tomar no sabía absolutamente nada. Entonces yo pienso que crear más programas que se enfocan en Latinos, es lo que deben hacer.” [When I came the first semester I didn’t know what to do nor what classes to take, I knew absolutely nothing. I think that creating more programs focused on Latinos is what they [the community college] should do.]

Recommendation 5: Improve campus academic and student services.

The co-researchers recommended that academic and student services be improved. Specifically, the co-researchers felt that interactions among the students, teachers, counselors, and mentors needed to change. One co-researcher, Cuatlicue noted, “Que haya más interacción con el estudiante y el maestro.” [Also, that there be more interaction with the student and teacher.] In addition, Zapata and Frida added that there is a need for more caring counselors. Zapata shared that, “we need more counselors.” Frida agreed and added, “Consejeros que sean sensible a los Latinos.” [We need counselors that are sensitive to Latinos.] The co-researchers also reported on how the limited experiences of some of their mentors circumscribed their abilities to fully support the Chicano/Latino student population.

Within counseling services, it was also recommended by the co-researchers in this study that the process for the students’ educational plans be presented to Chicano/Latino students in Spanish. Itzel asserted “otra cosa que se puede hacer más adelante es una orientación para el

educational plan pero en español. Porque muchas veces los mismos estudiantes no entienden los papeles.” [Another thing that can be done is to do orientations for the students’ educational plans in Spanish. [This is needed] because many times the students themselves don’t understand all the paperwork.] Another co-researcher added that a change be made where the campus might consider waiving the cost of books and not the registration. Esperanza asserted, “The books are very expensive and they cost more than registration. It seems to me that it would be better to get the help for the books and let the students pay for the registration fees.”

Recommendation 6: Peer advising by students for students.

The co-researchers recommended that peer-advising opportunities be created by students, for students. Cuatlicue explained, “yo creo que lo que debemos hacer es que entre nosotros hablar sobre nuestras experiencias más para compartir nuestra sabiduría con otros estudiantes.” [I think that what we need to do between us is talk about our experiences so that we can share our knowledge with other students.] The other co-researchers agreed and added that the peer advising would ideally cross different educational levels. Since the co-researchers had already experienced the community college they could share their knowledge with Chicano/Latino high school students. Another co-researcher suggested reaching out to students at the high school level to help them be better informed and prepared for college. Itzel stated, “yo creo que si pudieramos seleccionar una high school con mucha necesidad y nos pusieramos en contacto con la escuela creo que podemos hacer la diferencia para nuestras comunidades. Pero también tenemos que hacerlo en el colegio.” [I think if we can select a high school with great need and we contact the school, I believe that we can make a difference for our communities. But we also have to do it at our college.]

Recommendation 7: Develop Changing Academic Mentorship to Believe In Opportunity (C.A.M.B.I.O.) Student Organization.

The co-researchers recommended that a student organization be started that seeks to meet the core action plan recommendations made by students. This would be a student organization that reflects the change Chicano/Latino students are asking for in the education system.

Frida suggested,

Mi idea es por ejemplo como todo se comienza por poquito con 5 o 6 personas o menos. Pero mi plan o lo que tengo en mente, mi meta que CAMBIO sea algo que se quede. Pero no siempre vamos ha estar nosotros. Ya que reclutemos más gente we trust.

[My idea is for example like everything starts out with 5 or 6 people or less. My plan of what I have in mind or the goal is that CAMBIO be something that stays in this college. But we will not be here. We have to recruit more people we trust.]

Recommendation 8: Campus legal services

The co-researchers felt that if they could better understand their legal situations they could entertain the idea of advocating for themselves since their parents were hesitant to do anything based on their own lack of understanding of the legal system. As a result, the co-researchers recommended that legal assistance for students be made available at the community college level. A major concern for the co-researchers was the assumption of attending K-12 allows them to receive financial support services at the college level. They come to realize that their immigrant status at the community college level and university bars them from receiving these services. The co-researchers agreed that educating themselves with legal advice could relieve many students of their internal fears. Itzel affirmed, “I think it would be great to meet an attorney that can educate us on our options. I think that will help us reduce our personal fear.” Zapata added, “They should try to legalize something for undocumented students to at least get

the same benefits for financial aid. We are all worried about money! We are never going to find a solution.”

The co-researchers took the opportunity to become aware and question, and to finally create a solution that represents the Chicano/Latino community of which they are a part. The PAR process helps in creating a space for marginalized communities to experience themselves as a collective, to demonstrate their leadership, and to take action that incorporates both their individual and community needs. Through their experience and perception of the external factors of community awareness, questioning and creation, the co-researchers gained the skills of critical thinking, analysis, and development of voice, which empowered them.

Summary of *Nepantlá*. In summary, *Nepantlá* was the middle (spiritual) space of growth and learning. The co-researchers identified that males demonstrated themselves to be in *Nepantlá* as they confronted the external factors of school, family, and society. Also, within phase IV of the PAR process the co-researchers were encouraged to be part of the collective analysis, to share and edit, to have their voice listened to, and to help me, as well as each other, stay accountable to the process. This served to support the validity and reliability of this study. There was a sequence of levels – paradigm shift, feeling safe, validating the co-researchers within the process, working together, and trusting the process – that the co-researchers experienced which allowed them to understand and recognize their *choque*, change, and liberate themselves from their internal conflict in order to reclaim the self. The reclaiming came through the tangible results – such as the apparent personal transformations of the co-researchers – from the recommendations that they created as a community in response to the inequities they face in education.

Final message: the co-researchers' visible truth. Overall, the co-researchers concluded that when they started the study they neither had any idea what would happen nor what might come out of the process. They had seen themselves as invisible and unimportant in the education system. The co-researchers reported on a number of personal epiphanies by the conclusion of this process. They noted that because of the experience of coming through this process, they were now able to recognize their particular *choque* – or collision – between the institutions of school, family, and society. They realized that they were asked to live back and forth between three systems that do not communicate with one another.

The co-researchers asserted that through this process they were able to develop trust, and find their voices and their passions. Collectively, they faced many fears together and realized that they were not alone. This experience provided them with the opportunity to learn, grow, and teach other students to challenge themselves and the institutions they are a part of. In addition, they developed new relationships on and off campus and a new social network amongst themselves. The co-researchers who had identified themselves as undocumented reported that they now felt safe enough to disclose their immigrant status. Most importantly, they were no longer afraid to fight back and stand up for their rights as human beings.

The co-researchers left the process feeling empowered and liberated with new skills that taught them to reflect on, analyze and recognize their own internal qualities. As a result, the co-researchers found the middle space of *Nepantlá* whereby they were able to reclaim the self as well as their spirits. The process also taught them the various levels that they must go through before change can occur. They noted that they left this metamorphosis process with *esperanza* [hope] as visible human beings with the voice and power to make a difference for future generations of Chicano/Latino students.

Final summary of Chapter IV

The findings confirm the injustice and inequity in education that Chicano/Latino students are confronted with on a daily basis. It is through analyzing the external factors in education that allowed the students to examine their perceptions. The PAR five-phase process assisted in guiding the co-researchers to understand their experiences on a deeper level. They collectively faced their fears and the external messages that they had internalized. The study also revealed that the internal factors were qualified as one of the most important aspects that supported Chicano/Latino students' academic success. Moreover through the external factor triads of school, family, and society *el choque* was illuminated, indicating how overwhelmed Chicano/Latino students are from the demands from their inner turmoil. It is in this experience of standing in *el choque* where the middle space of *Nepantlá* can be found. Within this middle space of *Nepantlá* is where the change can occur. This study demonstrated how Chicano/Latino students from a community college were able to deconstruct their experiences of racism through ancestral practice for an equitable education. This experience transformed the students to take action for a better tomorrow.

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

SUMMARY

Introduction

This chapter contains five sections. Section 1 provides the summary of the study, section 2 provides conclusions from the research findings and previous studies, section 3 provides the recommendations for future research, and section 4 provides recommendations for change as well as three actions taken by the co-researchers. Finally, I conclude with section 5, my theoretical contributions and personal reflections on the research process. Within the summary of the study, I will also reconnect my research back to my theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT)/Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit). These theories served as the lens of my analysis since race was the central point of reference from which the data was analyzed, and became the platform for the conceptualization of my findings.

Restatement of the Problem

Demographic growth for Chicanos/Latinos has been dramatic over the past forty years (Hayes-Bautista, 2004). However, this growth has not guaranteed that Chicanos/Latinos take the lead in education (Gándara and Contreras, 2009). After over forty years of educational reform, Chicanos/Latinos have made minimal progress. However, they have taken the lead in other areas: Chicanos/Latinos lack educational attainment, they lead in education drop out rates and they lead as the ethnic population whose numbers live most in poverty. As a result, Chicanos/Latinos continue to be underserved, underrepresented and undereducated in high, disproportionate numbers. Education is killing students' souls by disengaging students from the

process of self-actualization, denying the opportunity to achieve academically while creating a dismal lack of opportunities for social and spiritual activism.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of Chicano/Latino students in community college, regarding what they identified as determinants of their academic success or failure. The co-researchers in the study were all Chicano/Latino students matriculated at a community college in a retention program. The methodology utilized for this study was Participatory Action Research (PAR) Maguire (1987), a five-phase group process. Phase I: Identify the problem; Phase II: Code and analyze generative themes; Phase III: Connect the co-researchers' interpretations to societal issues; Phase IV: Collective analysis; and Phase V: Develop an action plan. This methodology was appropriate for this study because it allowed the co-researchers to analyze their own self-knowledge through the problem at hand. In addition, the application of PAR fostered the development of their voice and leadership in social action in order to liberate and transform the world of the oppressed. These outcomes encouraged a deeper analysis through the emergence of the generative themes that were culturally relevant, language appropriate, and pertinent to the study's research questions.

Summary of the Findings

The research revealed the determinants of Chicano/Latino students' academic success or failure. PAR was the avenue from which the co-researchers identified external factors such as school, family, and society per research question 1. They embarked on this journey, together becoming aware, and began to question and create an action plan as a community. As they created community, they confronted fears that had negatively impacted their lives spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically. These aspects of Chicano/Latino student experience are

illuminated by the internal factors – conflict, discovery, and motivation – that assisted in facilitating their understanding of the negative messages that they had internalized, creating behaviors incongruent with their goals and commitments that impeded their academic success.

All the internal factors – even the internal conflict, once they were able to identify it – supported the academic success of Chicano/Latino students. This study assisted the co-researchers in shifting behaviors that proved incongruent with their internal needs and academic goals to make multiple important discoveries about the process and themselves. Through the emergence of their internal discoveries the co-researchers were provided with insight and the validation to honor themselves and shift from a place of collision to a place of validation.

The research revealed that Chicano/Latino students can become motivated and driven to persevere based on their own internal power. By understanding the connection of the external factors to the internal factors, the co-researchers gained a better sense of what Anzaldúa (1987) calls *el choque*. The process aided the co-researchers in discovering their internal power and in recognizing that their family was the common denominator of their resiliency and the motivating factor to achieve academically. Interestingly, this held true whether a co-researcher's family life was negative or positive. What emerged was a deeper sense of respect for self and family. These internal determinants blossom through the constant and consistent validation cultivated through PAR; without validation, motivation remains dormant.

CONCLUSIONS

In this section, I discuss conclusions drawn from the findings that emerged from the study as co-researchers responded to the research questions regarding the determinants of both their academic failures and successes. To support my co-researchers' findings, I am identifying the determinants of their failure and success. The determinants of failure included school and

society, while the determinants of success were internal conflict, discoveries, and motivation. I conclude that family in this study holds a place as a determinant of both success and failure.

Through the PAR process, the stereotypes, racism, and stress-related issues the co-researchers deconstructed in this study illustrated the deficit thinking and forced acculturation embedded in the education system and society that perpetuate poverty. I also compare and contrast other research studies to my findings in order to illuminate my study's unique contributions.

Determinants of Failure: School and Society

In this section I will discuss the major external factors and their sub-themes that emerged from the study. The co-researchers identified three primary external factors related to research question 1 as the following: school, family, and society. Each factor had sub-themes that significantly contributed to the academic success/failure of Chicano/Latino students. As a result of the findings, the study provided awareness of the perceptions of Chicano/Latino students and the challenges they have confronted and continue to face in society and education, including deficit thinking theory and forced acculturation, two influences which significantly diminish opportunities for access and retention throughout the education system.

In this section I will be focused on the various demands placed by the external factors of school, family, and society. Throughout the study, I found that Chicano/Latino students enter the educational settings with cultural experiences that conflict with the dominant mainstream culture of American society. Chicanos'/Latinos' capabilities as students are consistently questioned and undermined due to society's racism. The analysis of this problem began with a focus on how the external factors they named - the education system (school location and the environment, school tracking labels, the influence of teachers, counselors, the Puente program and the lack of

financial resources), family (mixed messages, role reversal/family expectations, birth order and its responsibilities), and gender roles – affected and/or motivated students internally.

In addition, in order to assist in the development of voice and empowerment, this study utilized Delgado and Stefanić (2001) CRT where race was the lens of the analysis. Through this framework, we analyzed the study findings as a way to confront the inequities and to bring light to the determinants that Chicano/Latino students perceive as affecting their academic success/failure. To complement CRT, LatCrit was included to present and honor Chicano/Latino students' voices through counter-storytelling (Yosso, 2006). Moreover, this framework served as a means to help Chicano/Latino students to resist injustices that they still face in the structures of education and within society.

Education. The first external factor identified by the co-researchers is school. After over forty years of educational reform well into the 21st Century, according to Gándara and Contreras (2009) and Hayes-Bautista (2004), Chicano/Latino students are still the least educated throughout the United States — the land of opportunity, where education is regarded as the key to entering a desired social class, building a better life and launching into the world of self discovery.

Past and present research points to the importance of making change in the education system to better serve Chicano/Latino students. Romo and Falbo's (1996) study found that multiple factors which were not being addressed by the education system were having an impact on at-risk students, and that therefore, major changes needed to occur to increase the success and retention of this student population.

My study produced a similar finding whereby all the co-researchers felt that changes needed to occur in education to better address their needs and circumstances because education

was tasked with providing them with the necessary tools to succeed in life. All eight of the co-researchers agreed that education was important but that the institution neither encouraged Chicano/Latino students to be critical thinkers nor to ask questions that might challenge the status quo, questions potentially related to why Chicano/Latino students continue to fail after forty years of educational reform.

All eight co-researchers agreed that regardless of what part of the country you are in, obtaining an education is essential for the individual's survival. They believed that education provides tools that teach global citizens to navigate in society. They also noted many determinants of failure that they continue to face specifically within the public education system.

Exclusionary school curriculum. One key determinant of failure for Chicanos/Latinos in public education is the presence of an exclusionary curriculum. Findings from Espinoza-Herold (2003) indicate that the lack of acknowledgement of Chicano/Latino experiences, communities, and realities in the school curriculum undermined motivation and interest on the part of this student population in education. My findings demonstrate how this exclusion of Chicano/Latino experience from the curriculum used in K-12 public schools made my co-researchers feel invisible. When Chicano/Latino students do not see themselves, their families, their communities, their histories reflected in the curriculum, their invisibility in the classroom prevents them from teaching others from their frame of reference. This topic was not discussed in detail within my study, but I felt that the co-researchers were consistently implying that the curriculum needed to include their experience because it was critical to their learning. These observations led me to the conclusion that curriculum needs to be balanced with material concerning both historical and contemporary Chicano/Latino experiences in order for the public

education system to demonstrate a systemic change to honor and empower this student population.

I found that the Puente Program's curriculum served to validate Chicano/Latino students' experiences and their historical contribution. In an ethnic historical context, the research process of this study allowed and required the students to analyze and think critically, which allowed them to better understand how they are viewed and how they view themselves within the education system. This collective critical analysis provided the co-researchers with a more in-depth understanding of the challenges and triumphs that Chicanos/Latinos have faced throughout history. Inclusionary curriculum is, in fact, a key component in developing Chicano/Latino student voice (Darder, 1997), as it encourages them to speak up and share what they think of themselves and their history.

Culturally sensitive curriculum. Cultural sensitivity in curriculum supports the growth of student identity. Espinoza-Herold (2003) examined this effect as it impacted students' cultural interpretations of their experiences in education. The study revealed the difficulties that Chicano/Latino students face when they are placed in urban schools. The services they receive are slower, less personal and more bureaucratic; however, the culturally sensitive curriculum in the schools Espinoza-Herold looked at was essential in keeping these students engaged in their educational process. The difference between Espinoza-Herold's (2003) study and mine was that my co-researchers were not exposed to culturally sensitive curriculum. The exclusion of Chicano/Latino students' history in K-12 curriculum affirmed these students' beliefs that the education system did not care about them or their academic success. This created a major disconnect in their learning process. Once they were in college in the Puente Program, however, they reported being provided with literature they could relate to, scholarly works from different

Chicano/Latino historical perspectives to engage and validate their experiences. Exposure to this curriculum helped these students give voice to their understanding of their experience of feeling invisible in society; as they gained greater awareness and questioned the negative messages, they began to understand how deficit thinking and forced acculturation had determined the curriculum they had been exposed to in K-12. As Chicano/Latino students understood the K-12 challenges, they realized that beyond the curriculum they were exposed to or excluded from, their school location and environment had also created challenges that were out of their control, challenges that became larger problems in their lives, determining their socio-economic status to a significant degree.

External impediments to success. Beyond the curriculum issue, within the education system there were many other factors that also impeded the academic success of Chicano/Latino students. Bohon, Macpherson and Atilés's (2005) study focused on barriers that Chicanos/Latinos faced. They found that Chicanos/Latinos lacked understanding of the education system, residential stability, parental involvement, support services from the state, incentives for the continuation of education, access to higher education due to immigrant status and general access to opportunities to adapt to mainstream society.

In my study, I found that the co-researchers were dealing with all of the above-stated issues except for residential stability. This may have largely been due to the fact that all the co-researchers except for one were living with their parents. My study revealed that Chicano/Latino students have a great regard for education. They all agreed that education was important because it provided individuals with the necessary tools to negotiate within society and to live a better life. Significantly, there was no difference between the views of undocumented AB 540 or first generation Chicano/Latino students. Seven out of the eight co-researchers of the study were

educated in the public school system in the United States, while only one completed high school in Mexico. The co-researchers felt that their educational experiences in the public school system and the low expectations of them by teachers and counselors discouraged them from being questioners. Despite my co-researchers' regard for education, they found it difficult to advance due to the multiple barriers to access they encountered. I found that the co-researchers implied that the stability necessary to support the pursuit of educational goals ideally must come from the education system providing equitable learning tools for all its students regardless of residential stability.

School tracking labels. One contributing factor to this pattern of inequity is the practice of school tracking. Valenzuela (1999), Romo and Falbo (1996) and Yosso's (2006) studies focused on assessment and testing, and tracking labels revealed that lower test scores excluded Chicano/Latino students from programs that they could benefit from. My findings revealed that based on test scores and forms completed in K-12, Chicano/Latino students were automatically placed on different paths – ESL, ELL, Bilingual, or shelter classes – which attached negative labels to Chicano/Latino students. The co-researchers saw these programs as pathways that did not lead to college. These Chicano/Latino students were aware that their low test scores not only excluded them from beneficial academic and creative programs in high school, but from college preparation programs as well. The negative effects of school tracking labels on Chicano/Latino students did not end here.

Notably, in my study, Chicano/Latino students internalized the negative messages and deficit thinking from their K-12 school experiences. The school tracking labels had a detrimental internal effect on Chicano/Latino students' self-esteem and academic success. These school tracking labels excluded Chicano/Latino students from the K-12 mainstream, advanced

placement, college preparation and honors programs that would have provided them with more options for college and a better life. The co-researchers perceived and identified the following school tracking labels – English Language Learner (ELL), English as a Second Language (ESL), Shelter and Bilingual classes/programs – as negatively impacting them in their academic progress. They saw these school tracking labels as a barrier to an even playing field in education.

Moreover, the school tracking labels were perceived as deceptive. Chicano/Latino students felt that they were led to believe that being tracked under these classes/programs would help them advance academically, while in reality, the labels only served to hinder them, which placed them at a disadvantage. Further, the negative impact of these labels have carried over to their community college experience, where the students are always playing catch up because of the inequitable preparation they received in the K-12 public schools. The school tracking labels are only one part of the inequity that Chicano/Latino students deal with. Combined with a lack of culturally sensitive curriculum, and the external impediments reviewed in the earlier section, school tracking labels reinforce the message that the education system does not care about Chicano/Latino students.

School location and environment. School location and environment are also significant determinants of Chicano/Latino students' academic successes and failures. Gill and Leigh's (2004) study focused on specific stress factors; they found that the community colleges more often serving the Chicano/Latino population funneled these students through vocational programs and limited access to transferable courses. Location of the community colleges was a key focus in their study. They found that transfer majors and directly transferable classes were offered closer to UC/CSU systems, while vocational education programs, comprised largely of

non-transferable courses, were more often located in communities of minority populations where there was a greater concentration of Chicano/Latino students. The vocational programs led to an immediate integration into the workforce.

Unlike Gill and Leigh's study, a major difference in my study was that I examined not just the Chicano/Latino students' educational environments, but the dual environments of community and school. Regardless of geographic location, Chicano/Latino students were dealing with significant differences in their educational environments and their community environments compared to their white counterparts; these differences in the environment have a great impact on the Chicano/Latino students' academic success. For example, the co-researchers emphasized that in their K-12 educational experience, school location made a difference in the quality of education they received.

The co-researchers were also aware that the school districts they attended both in Oakland and Hayward, and their surrounding communities, were considered impoverished, and they understood that this linked to a lack of college preparation of youth by the K-12 education system. In addition, Chicano/Latino students understood that the location of the school spoke to the social class represented and the types of available resources in the schools they attended.

Like Gill and Leigh, Muñoz (1986) and I all examined stress factors that affect Chicano/Latino students specifically in their new college environment. While Gill's and Leigh's work identified external stress factors based on the location of the community college, Muñoz focused on how the community college environment itself created internal stress in Chicano/Latino students; I additionally incorporated analysis of Chicanos'/Latinos' community environment in my study. Muñoz found that they experience more anxiety than both white students and other students of color related to the adjustment to their new environment of

college. Muñoz, however, only focused on the college environment. When I incorporated an analysis of students' personal community environments, as well as their educational environments, I found that Chicano/Latino students deal with multiple stresses created from the poverty they live in both at home and in their surrounding community environments.

There are three major differences between my study and Muñoz's. First, in my study, the co-researchers were aware that the environment they lived in determined the quality of their education. More significantly, they reported coming from environments where they were affected by community issues related to gang activity, violence and poverty. Second, the co-researchers were experiencing the current backlash of the anti-immigrant sentiment in society. Finally, more than half of the co-researchers were affected by violent murders of their friends committed in their environment during the time of this study.

The co-researchers in my study are not the only ones who have noted the importance of the elements of location and environmental geography around community colleges. Chapa and Schink (2006) examined the role of the community college and if its purpose to provide access was accomplished. They concluded that the community college does help to facilitate the paths to higher education of youth of color and low-income youth, but there were still massive issues for students such as systemic barriers, financial hardship, parents' typically lower educational level, minimal space at the university level, and no standardized requirements across the community college system. In addition, Yosso's (2006) study found at the community college level Chicano/Latino students face systemic challenges such as misinformation, over-crowdedness and limited access to courses, counselors, professors and support services.

Moreover the neighborhood environment of the student, and the location of the community college play a major role in the Chicano/Latino students' preparation as well as the

services provided by their locally accessible higher education. I found that Chicano/Latino students are still plagued with the inequities found in previous studies. A major finding of my study was that at Chabot College (a representative community college) there are 15,000 students who attend; approximately 3,889 of this student population are Chicano/Latino, but only 50 students are allowed to participate in the Puente Program. Considering the major Chicano/Latino population increase at Chabot College, and its status as a Hispanic Serving Institute with over 26% Chicano/Latino students, one would think that the program would expand and the success rate would also increase for this population. Unfortunately, the Puente program has not expanded since its inception, despite the Chicano/Latino population increase.

Deficit thinking and racism. Valenzuela (1999), in her three-year study of academic achievement, found that Chicano/Latino students experienced daily humiliations and mistreatment at school. In my study, I found something similar: situations where teachers were blatantly expressing their doubts of the students' capabilities and potential. Another finding was that Chicano/Latino students tended to excuse such teachers' comments. The co-researchers concluded that this was just part of the stereotyping in society that they deal with everyday. Valenzuela (1999), Espinoza-Herold (2003) noted that teachers were important in guiding students through the education system. Though I too found that teachers have the power to motivate, discourage, and disengage Chicano/Latino students from the learning process, the co-researchers indicated that the counselor, not the teacher, was often the key individual who assisted students and their families with the navigation of the education system.

Although Chacón et al. (1986) agreed with Valenzuela and Espinoza-Herold that teachers were key determinants regarding student success and failure, they also found that counseling was a major area that needed reform. One potential change Chacón et al. proposed was the idea that

a student's slow progress needed to be evaluated by the counselor as a matter of making sure the student is on track to success. In my study, more co-researchers reported having an overall negative experience with their counselors. Only two students felt that their counselor was culturally sensitive and helpful. The co-researchers conveyed that counselors were not clear regarding their academic advising and did not evaluate or actively address their slow progress. Furthermore, due to the many challenges that Chicano/Latino students face, counseling is necessary to provide support in various areas of their life, not just academics. Nazario's (2007) study noted that counseling was essential for Chicano/Latino students because their experiences and needs are unique from the rest of the student body.

My study's findings added new dimensions to Chacón et al. (1986) and Nazario (2007) findings. My co-researchers explicitly stated that their educational experience was affected by the following areas: parents' lack of knowledge of the education system, campus navigation, lack of clarity regarding AB 540, inaccessibility of financial aid and unclear or prohibitive transfer requirements. Moreover, my study revealed that counselors did not make Chicano/Latino students feel like they could readily discuss personal issues that could be affecting their academic success. Chicano/Latino students needed help in academic areas that were ignored. Similar to Brown and Rivas (1993), my study also revealed that Chicano/Latino students came to the community college with lack of trust because of their previous educational experiences in K-12. Their residual mistrust of counselors from their earlier educational contexts impacted their experiences in college.

Lack of financial resources. Lack of a positive relationship with one's community college counselor can have devastating effects, especially in combination with a lack of access to other resources. My study revealed that both parents and students were not informed early on

regarding the available or potentially available resources at the community college. A major related finding in my study was that only one out of the eight co-researchers were receiving financial aid. Muñoz's study (1986) found that finances greatly impacted the success of Chicano/Latino students. These students tended to work more than the rest of the student population on average and were concerned about accruing debt, supporting themselves and contributing financially to family. My research found that the lack of resources and the responsibility they therefore felt to contribute created additional stress, making it difficult to focus on academic studies. In addition, stress was created by both the lack of resources and the overlapping demands of school, family and society. Also, at the community college, Chicano/Latino students were dealing with additional barriers that none of the previous studies found.

Similar to Bohon, Macpherson and Atilas' (2005) findings, I found Chicano/Latino students were often denied access to higher education due to their undocumented immigrant status. In my study, three out of the eight co-researchers were considered AB 540 (undocumented) students, which prevented them from receiving campus resources. However, it was really no different for the other five Chicano/Latino students who were U.S. citizens. Since their parents were immigrants or undocumented and lacked knowledge of how the educational system works, the students were at a similar disadvantage in obtaining resources. The infrastructure purportedly set up to support Chicanos/Latinos is in practice set up to fail them. However, despite the pervasiveness of these obstacles, Chicanos/Latinos can still become empowered through the gaining of insight and the process of knowing themselves – this insight and self-knowledge can be a determinant of success.

Determinants of Success: Internal Conflict, Discoveries, and Motivation

Internal factors – specifically internal conflict and discoveries, and the resultant internal motivation – are fundamental contributors to Chicano/Latino students' growth and empowerment. In this section, I will discuss the three major internal factors that emerged from the study. The co-researchers identified the internal factors related to research question 2 as the following: internal conflict and internal discoveries that connected to research question 3, from which they identified internal motivation. The findings revealed how the negative messages from the external factors created internal conflict for Chicano/Latino students, which impeded their academic success. Moreover, by confronting the conflict, Chicano/Latino students noted multiple internal discoveries that served to support their attitude change and empowerment.

Internal conflict. The first major internal factor is internal conflict. This internal conflict was experienced at the points of incongruency between the incompatible value systems of Chicano/Latino culture and the larger American mainstream culture. The co-researchers reported receiving negative messages from their experiences at school, with their family, and in society, messages that, when internalized, led to internal conflict.

My study revealed that Chicano/Latino males are also affected by the gender roles both at home and in society. Gándara and Contreras (2009) explained in their research how Chicano/Latino males have a more difficult time in school and are more likely to be placed in special education classes than Chicana/Latina females and their white counterparts, and are often out-performed by Chicana/Latina students. Also, Pizzaro (2005) explained how Chicano/Latino males are dramatically affected by the hostile environments they live in and the policies that govern their movements within this environment (for example Driving While Black/Brown (DWBB)). Chicano/Latino males are also confronted with being discriminated against within

their own culture. A major finding of my study was that although females experienced the hostility in the environment, the males were more directly and violently confronted by this reality. For example, during the time of my study, at least two Chicano/Latino males were murdered whose deaths were close enough to affect more than half of the co-researchers in my study. I also found that Chicano/Latino males reported being stopped by police more than did Chicana/Latina females. One of the males from my study left school in the middle of the semester. This is significant because I don't know the extent to which the listed pressures here may have pushed him out. Furthermore, this Chicano/Latino male reported that he was confronted with gang issues in his community. I did not exclude his participation because he contributed to the research and I wanted his experience and voice to be heard. The students' life decisions and experiences are emblematic of many of the racial and gender patterns my study identified.

Chicano/Latino males and females face different issues that create different types of internal conflict; however, they all struggle with many common pressures. Both males and females in my study internalized stress and anguished over the death of peers. Moreover, they struggled against the imposed banality of violence and with the resultant energy and resources they were required to devote to survival.

Muñoz's (1986) study found that Chicano/Latino students are psychologically affected by high levels of stress. Major et al, (2007) found that Chicano's/Latino's self-esteem was greatly impacted by perceived discrimination against them. These pressures lead uniformly to internal conflict within each co-researcher. My study revealed that as the co-researchers went through this process, they were able to unravel some of the conflicts that immobilized them and that they also perceived as discriminatory.

The primary challenge faced by Chicano/Latino students is that they usually are unaware as to why they are in conflict. The lack of awareness leads to the detrimental effects and incongruent behaviors that create the inner turmoil. Through the PAR five-phase group process Chicano/Latino students unraveled the external factors and confronted the problem.

Chicano/Latino students began to understand their sense of conflict between the external and internal factors, a conflict generated by the incongruent pressures and expectations of family, school, and society. The process of the research allowed the co-researchers to recognize and name the messages about themselves from the external factors that they had accepted as being true. The findings revealed that, just as the institution blamed Chicano/Latino students for their failure (Valencia, 1997, Espinoza-Herold, 2003) they too blamed themselves for not knowing or naming the injustices they were living through on a daily basis.

Based on previous studies also, researchers have concluded that external factors affected Chicano/Latino students internally. Nazario (2007) found that Chicano/Latino students enter educational environments with their own internal issues because of their external experiences. Freire (2000) also expressed how the oppressed oppress themselves through internalizing the external messages. Gracia and DeGreiff (2000), Pizzaro (2005) and Gándara (2001), whose research illustrated Freire's theory, all noted that Chicano/Latino students internalized messages which oppressed them. Sometimes those who no longer wanted to identify with their culture faced their own repression. On the other hand, Stanton-Salazar (2001) noted that each person's acculturation process is unique and complex. Although this process is indeed unique, what is significant in my study is that Chicanos/Latinos' as a group share a specific experience of forced acculturation through the process of education, which results in negative internal oppression as illustrated by the co-researchers' experiences in education. In addition, Chicano/Latino students

who perceived discrimination in Major et al's MI study reported having lower self-esteem. My study has provided a more in-depth analysis of how this perceived discrimination in school and society leads to internalized oppression, ultimately resulting in low self-esteem.

Internal discoveries. The second major internal factor is internal discoveries. As the Chicano/Latino students began to see clearly their internal conflict they were then able to begin to see how they had been systematically stripped from their belief system, identity, and integrity as human beings. In my study, I found that the co-researchers discovered the confluence of factors that had created the incongruencies in their lives. They also discovered how external and internal factors were connected and not separate from themselves. The co-researchers noted the conflicting messages they receive from both the education system and their families. More importantly, the dialogues served as a path to understanding their parents' experiences and how to make change one step at a time. Furthermore, they discovered that they were not alone and that through this process they were able to face their fears. The co-researchers created a community and became aware of how to better deal with their personal situations. They also realized that they would leave the process with additional skills and insights that they could utilize again in life. These discoveries echoed Gil and Vasquez's (1996) findings that taking care of oneself increases self-worth. My co-researchers' discovery of their own resilience assisted them in analyzing their painful reality and surroundings – racism, AB 540 undocumented status, the imposition of limiting gender roles – with a clearer lens. Branden's (1983) work on self-esteem as the grounds of consciousness established that in sending the searchlight of consciousness outward toward the world and inward toward one's own being one re-grounds oneself and honors one's own experience and also the right as a human being to be present; the co-researchers took these steps as they discovered their internal conflict. They discovered that

they had disregarded covert attitudes of racism that had been directed toward them through their educational experiences, as indicated throughout the research. The process of internal discovery made clear to the co-researchers what was motivating them to succeed in their pursuit of education; the conscious experience of self-efficacy created an internal belief that the co-researchers were able to confront their problems and find solutions. Moreover, as they allowed themselves to be aware and think freely, it became easier to identify their internal motivation.

Internal motivation. The third major internal factor is internal motivation. This factor came out of the co-researchers' responses to research question 3 and identifies what continues to ultimately motivate them to continue on their educational journeys. The findings revealed that all the co-researchers had a significant experience that motivated them. I also found that internal motivation was driven by the co-researchers' families. By naming their motivation and making sense of their inner borderlands the co-researchers came to better understand "*el choque*" [cultural collision], an understanding which allowed them to find the middle space of *Nepantlá* (Anzaldúa, 1987).

For the most part, the internal factors supported Chicano/Latino student success. The students' motivation was reignited through constant validation as they underwent the PAR five-phase process. Notably by naming their motivation the co-researchers became empowered.

Family as a determinant of success. Similar to Gándara's (1995) study, family was the common determinant of success. Although this held true for my co-researchers, in partial contrast to Gándara, I found that what motivated them about their family situations was not necessarily that they were always positive and supportive. Over three fourths of the co-researchers noted that despite their parents' conscious efforts to support their educational goals, their parents' lack of resources, lack of education, and language barrier often undermined their

academic progress. However, most often, these obstacles ultimately motivated them to continue their education in order to have a better life than their parents. When students were not propelled forward by the facts of their family lives, external factors had a great negative impact on them. Muñoz (1986) found that Chicano/Latino students were more affected by home adjustment demands than their white counterparts; they were more alienated and had more family stress which was less visible but more draining. This student population dealt with more personal stress in every aspect of the study.

My findings mirrored some of Muñoz's findings in that Chicano/Latino students did come to college dealing with personal stress that was both visible and invisible. However, in contrast to Muñoz, I found that Chicano/Latino students were faced with dual stresses not only from having to adjust to the college environment but also from their families and the impoverished communities they live in. Although Muñoz mentioned family stress, he did not include the specific types of challenges students face within their family. A major finding in my study was that Chicano/Latino students identified the family stresses they experienced, naming them as follows: mixed messages, role reversal, family expectations, birth order and its responsibilities. Throughout the family stresses the students identified, gender roles and expectations are embedded as an issue.

Parents expected their children to fulfill school and home responsibilities. Another significant finding in my study was that Chicano/Latino students began the process unaware of the conflict these multiple pressures had created inside them, and the stress it had caused internally. Over the course of the study, the co-researchers were able to define their respective internal conflicts. I also found that there was a sense of generational cultural responsibility that Chicano/Latino students expressed that also affected them. Moreover, I found that home

responsibilities made education the last priority as survival was placed as the first priority for the Chicano/Latino students' families. Within the family, gender roles created significant added stress. Chicana/Latina students had the worst stress level compared to whites and Chicano/Latino male students; moreover, they experienced more anxiety related to the adjustment to environments of higher education.

Chacón et al.'s (1986) findings revealed that more Chicanos/Latinos end up at the community college, work more hours, often have low socio-economic status, and are often older in age with domestic responsibilities. There was a major difference between male and female academic performance and Chicanos/Latinos were the least likely to seek support services due to schedule demands. Most of the challenges that Chacón et al. identified as primary barriers to student success were based in the home or the facts of Chicano/Latino students' lives, not directly in the functioning of the education system.

In contrast, my study revealed that Chicano/Latino students had a greater disadvantage due to the lack of resources from both school and home. There were some other striking differences between Chacón's study and mine. While Chacón et al. found that the Chicano/Latino students were older in age with domestic responsibilities, my study indicated that neither age nor gender mattered when determining the level of domestic responsibility a Chicano/Latino student had. For example, my co-researchers were all younger in age, but still held domestic responsibilities just like the older students in Chacón's findings since the co-researchers' parents had to work. These students were required to take on their parents' roles, a pattern which I called role reversal in my study. A significant finding of my study was that both males and females were expected to continue their studies regardless of the stress created by the conflicting and layered demands of both school and home.

On top of the many demands already placed on Chicano/Latino students through school and family expectations, they also had to deal with cultural expectations related to gender. Often, the Chicano/Latino culture places community first and the individual, specifically females, last. Muñoz (1986) found that there was a major difference in stress specifically for Chicana/Latina females. There is an accepted hierarchy where helping family is first, then the community comes second, then the individual males and last, females. This tacit hierarchy leaves ample room for, and in fact can depend upon, unspoken expectations and demands placed on Chicanas/Latinas.

As a result, there is a constant negotiation for Chicana/Latina women regarding their roles and identities. They are more affected than men by the oppressions of both colonialism and religion, and in response to these oppressions, have often internalized the negative messages and placed themselves last based on traditional roles ingrained from childhood.

At the same time, they began to understand what was motivating them to persevere: their own internal power and strength. This discovery was enabled by the constant validation mutually provided by the co-researchers and researcher within the PAR process, which heightened community awareness as the co-researchers became community questioners and creators of change. Moreover, the study provided insight into the lives of Chicano/Latino students and their experiences that continue to motivate them to persevere and realize their educational dreams. Chicano/Latino students exist under a great amount of stress because of the lack of communication among the institutions of school, family and society, a lack which amplifies the challenges they face and exacerbates *el choque* [collision].

Internal motivation in Chicano/Latino students can be supported by programs like the Puente Program. However, the Puente program only allows 50 students per semester to

participate, while Chabot College, where this program is housed, has now increased its Chicano/Latino population to 26%. I would say due to the lack of the institutional change to increase the number of students who may participate or expand the program, it is my opinion that in light of the overall data, and the fact that only 50 students may routinely enter the Puente program, this community college is a dead end for Chicano/Latino students. The resources offered there are starkly inadequate to meet the needs of this growing population.

Aside from the teachers, the counselors were seen as major contributors to Chicano/Latino failure from as early as pre-K, K-12 and throughout the education system. Counselors are the conduits of access for Chicano/Latino families, but they are often not equipped bilingually or bi-culturally to deal with Chicano/Latino students, thereby creating a greater challenge for this population to succeed. This fact places more Chicano/Latino students at risk of being pushed out of the community college due to the lack of resources and discriminatory policies such as AB 540.

In conclusion, Chicano/Latino students need to understand the messages from the external factors that they internalize. Without the appropriate tools – critical community awareness, community questioning and community creation – and the validation that comes from experiencing these factors – Chicano/Latino students will not be able to understand their internal conflict, because they will not be able to decipher the messages that have created it. Liberating oneself from the messages of external factors that are outside one's control involves an in-depth process of analysis and self-reflection in order to discover one's strengths. This discovery engenders an attitude change and resultant paradigm shift from one of self-oppression to one of self-acceptance; this shift is the praxis of internal motivation.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this section I will discuss the recommendations for future research, most of which are driven by a consideration of the external pressures on Chicano/Latino students. According to Valenzuela, (1999), Darder, (1997), Yosso, (2006), Gándara and Contreras (2009) and Kever (2009) equitable education plays a major role in reducing the achievement gap of Chicano/Latino students. Yet, studies on factors that impede the academic success of Chicano/Latino students need to consider how educational inequities contribute to the culture of poverty and the new underclass (Gándara and Contreras, 2009, Yosso, 2006, Chacón et al. 1986, and Muñoz, 1986). The studies that exist thus far have remained focused on the external factors. This study has demonstrated how the external oppressive factors affected Chicano/Latino students internally. Moreover, by identifying and then distinguishing between the external and internal factors in a broad educational context, this study illustrates how constant validation drives internal motivation and empowers Chicano/Latino students to persist where the problems in education impact them negatively. Given these external societal factors, although I agreed with the co-researchers' action plan in chapter four and with their call for culturally relevant curriculum, I have added the following recommendations to complement the research findings.

- Research and identify environmental pressures (i.e., gangs, violence, abuse, drugs, poverty and lack of education) that Chicano/Latino students experience and how they are affected by these pressures compared to their white counterparts.
- Research college readiness programs for middle-school-aged Chicano/Latino students and observe the results of early intervention and the dissemination of information regarding attending college through longitudinal studies.

- Research the extent to which Chicano/Latino students are placed in classes that fulfill the A-G requirements in high school: A- History/Social Science (2 years), B-English (4 years), C- Math (3 years required/4 year recommended), D- Laboratory Science (2 years required/3 years recommended), E- Foreign Language (2 years required/3 years recommended), F-Visual and Performing Arts (1 year) and G-College Preparatory Electives (1 year). This research can be a useful indicator to examine how segregated the current education system is, and the role of race in school tracking policies.
- Research drop out/push out rates of Chicano/Latino males in the education system. This is important because within my study one male did not finish the whole process. This is significant because his contribution was strong from the beginning. I did not exclude him from the study record because he contributed significantly to the research and I wanted his experience and voice to be heard. His major concern was how Chicano/Latino males are affected and compelled by their environment. My question would be: how does the Chicano/Latino males' environment affect academic decisions? Are they pushed out of school or do they drop out of their own free will?
- Future research should be focused on Chicano/Latino males, whereby a Chicano/Latino male researcher replicates the study to see if the results reveal different findings. In other words, is there a gender bias regarding gender research when it is conducted by a female versus a male? The goal of this research would be to gain a better understanding of the Chicano/Latino male experience in the education system.
- Attempt to identify why many Chicanos/Latinos who start their higher education experience in community college leave. More specifically, to understand if

Chicano/Latino students see themselves as being pushed out because of the community college barriers or as leaving voluntarily?

- Replicate this study with other Latino groups (i.e., Central American students and/or South American students) to see if the Latino experience is the same or different compared to Chicanos/Latinos in the community college?
- Quantitative research efforts should focus on capturing the experiences of more Chicano/Latino students in order to impact policy change and educational training.
- The point of generational cultural responsibility was not explored in depth but could be considered for future research to better understand Chicano/Latino cultural experience.
- Research on the exclusionary nature of the curriculum in the education system as a determinant of academic failure, and research on culturally relevant curriculum to examine whether and how it may empower Chicano/Latino students. This research would provide data that could support teachers, counselors and administrators to guide Chicano/Latino students through the educational system.
- Further in-depth research should be pursued on the impact of Validation theory and how it affects a student's spirit.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

This section will deal with the following areas: a) five recommendations for change, and b) the three action steps the co-researchers initiated in the space of *Nepantlá*, where the co-researchers took their personal development as leaders to make a difference in their communities. First, I will share the five recommendations for change and then the three actions

(ultimately taken by myself and the co-researchers at Chabot College as part of the process of empowerment).

The Five Recommendations

These are the five recommendations for change for myself and other researchers committed to contributing to change in the future. They are ranked in the order of systemic change, through the various levels within the community college that affect faculty, counselors, students, and parents:

1. For community colleges in general,
2. Chabot College
3. For the Puente Program faculty and counselors at Chabot College,
4. For the Puente students at Chabot College,
5. For the Puente parents/ family support structures at Chabot.

These recommendations are based on need and applicability as identified and explored by the co-researchers and I through the PAR Process. The recommendations which are specific to Chabot can be utilized as models for change in other institutions facing similar issues.

Community Colleges. Beyond the co-researchers' specific actions taken, I have developed five additional action steps as recommendations for Community College and the Puente Program at Chabot college that can serve as an evaluation and an assessment of ways to improve the program by making it more successful in meeting the needs of Chicano/Latino students, parents, and their communities. These recommendations encourage the integration of a holistic approach that works to recognize the many aspects of an individual student's identity, experiences, roles, expectations, and environmental factors.

Chabot College. Community colleges should develop and institutionalize language appropriate workshops for both prospective high school and college Chicano/Latino students and their parents, family-focused orientations specifically for (undocumented) AB 540 and 1st generation incoming students, and resolutions to make the environment a safe haven for AB 540 undocumented immigrants. This is important because some parents have not completed school in the U.S. or do not have sufficient English proficiency to access the information that would assist their children in making important life choices. (See figure 1 for High School Workshop Process see page 220 and figure 2 for the Community College Workshops Process see page 221). To have these workshops funded by the federal funding for HSI status would help, as they could become part of an intervention to increase the retention of Chicano/Latino students.

Chabot College is a great example of a community college that has institutionalized these changes on a bare minimal level. For the last twenty years Chabot College has operated the Puente Program with one English course and one counseling course. No change has been implemented or expanded. As a model program that has championed student success, it can set the trend by expanding to support more Chicano/Latino students for the duration of their time at the community college.

As an institution, Chabot College serves approximately 3,889 Chicano/Latino students out of a total student population of 15,000. The Chicano/Latino student population makes up 26% of the student population. The problem is that out of the 3,889 Chicano/Latino students the college only allows the Puente Program to assist 50 students in two cohorts of 25 students per year. By 2050, the Chicano/Latino population overall is projected to grow to 52%. If we continue to help only 50 students, we will continue to see an increase of push outs, poverty, unemployment, and violence in the community environment the college serves.

Moreover, the college can review, develop, and implement a counter to entrenched policies that segregate and exclude Chicano/Latino students from services on campus.

Developing a program to train the staff at a community college with Chicano/Latino students through this process would support at an institutional level to rethink and revamp how they can prepare for and ensure success at their college for this student population.

Puente Program (Faculty and Counselor). It is important for faculty and counselors to welcome not only the student but also their family. It is imperative to develop an orientation for parents, educating them on the demands of college and how they can best support the student. In addition, it is important to work collaboratively to develop community outreach efforts and work with families confidentially regarding legal and immigration issues. Finally, it is crucial to develop a financial resource manual in conjunction with financial aid services specifically for 1st generation and AB 540 undocumented students.

School districts, especially those with HSI's, should develop curriculum across disciplines to help the understanding of both first generation and AB 540 undocumented students. Schools could develop a database of language appropriate peer advisors that can facilitate the navigation process in the community college more effectively. Puente specifically – as a model – should consider program policy change to include the math component to ensure the completion of remedial courses to increase the retention of Chicano/Latino students at the community college. Finally, institutions could devote resources to training others, including community college and high school teachers and counselors to run intervention programs.

The Puente Student. Puente students need to become involved in on-campus activities to minimize the time they spend in the community environments they live in that can compromise their academic goals. In addition, they need to trust themselves to learn to navigate

unwelcoming environments that they are unfamiliar with. Although students need to get involved, the community college still needs to consider the unique situation of students with undocumented parents and/or who are also undocumented in their outreach and retention efforts. These families deal with multiple barriers to access.

The Puente Parent/Family. Puente parents need to be more involved and participate, show up and vote in the PTA in the High school and become involved in the community college environment when possible. Moreover, parents need to know who is on the school board making the decisions about what the students are learning. Parents need to become aware of how to navigate the educational system. In addition, parents should develop an asset-based network with other parents for co-op rides, childcare and other support. It is important for parents to understand where they stand when it comes to their immigration status. The parents' immigration status can often impact the parents' decision to participate in the educational process of their children; that is, if the parent fears deportation, they will be less likely to participate in forums like the PTA in which they can be identified and subsequently deported.

Co-researchers' Three Actions

The three actions taken included the establishment of 1) a Team Ambassador, 2) the creation of the *CAMBIO* [change] student organization, and 3) the creation and implementation of language appropriate workshops. These three actions created an environment that placed their needs and their communities' needs paramount, by shifting from the oppressive state to a more engaged place of activism; the co-researchers moved from being invisible and oppressed to being visible and empowered. These three actions are significant because they can serve as models for recommendations for future interventions on behalf of Chicano/Latino students.

Team Ambassador. The implementation of a Team Ambassador was the first of three actions taken. With the co-researchers, I was able to create and implement a portion of our action plan reported in chapter four. As part of the solution to help (undocumented) AB 540 students in this study, the co-researchers were encouraged to apply for a scholarship to the Educators for Fair Consideration (E4FC) Program. The eligibility requirement requested that only undocumented students apply. Three of the co-researchers applied, and one was selected to be an ambassador. The co-researcher selected became the team ambassador. The ambassador was trained by the non-profit organization E4FC in the following areas:

- Knowing your rights.
- Dream Act.
- Learning to organize and fundraise.
- Providing scholarships and resources.
- Sharing experience with other undocumented students from other community colleges and four-year universities in open forums, such as the University of California Leadership for the Achieve your Dreams Conference, (AB 540 Conference) sponsored by Rising Immigrant Scholars through Education (RISE), with information and articles of undocumented students at UCLA identified as the invisibles.

The ambassador's training was in the areas that the co-researchers identified as issues they wanted to learn about that would assist them in navigating in higher education. The ambassador's role was to serve as a leader, role model and trainer. All the co-researchers participated in a peer training with the above materials in efforts to help other Chicano/Latino students.

***CAMBIO* [Change] Student Organization.** The development of *CAMBIO* [Change] is second action taken that I have chosen to highlight in this section in the hopes that it may serve as a model for institutions facing similar issues. Although there were many student organizations on their college campus, the co-researchers felt that various specific issues were not being confronted that Chicano/Latino students continue to face in the education system. In hopes to make a change, they developed a student organization named *CAMBIO* [Change], which stood for Changing Academic Mentorship to Believe in Opportunity. *CAMBIO* [Change] was to specifically deal with the findings of this research study that are important to the success of Chicano/Latino future generations entering community college and higher education. In the Spanish language the word *CAMBIO* [Change] means change. The co-researchers took their vision to the community where they linked their action plan to begin by working directly with a high school located in Oakland, CA. The goal was to form a link within the education system to inform Chicano/Latino students who were planning to transfer to four-year universities or community college of their experiences.

Language Appropriate Workshops. The third action that the co-researchers determined essential to navigate the community college was language appropriate workshops. These workshops worked better in Spanish than English in the Chicano/Latino community. The co-researchers and the researcher developed a high school workshop for Spanish speaking parents and students. Based on this research the co-researchers determined that the use of language was an asset that could provide an invitation to dialogue with Chicano/Latino parents. We wanted to utilize what the education system thinks is a deficit as an asset to inform Chicano/Latino families of the steps they need to take to attend college or a four-year university. The co-researchers served as a Chicano/Latino student panel at a local High School, where they presented and

shared their experiences as (undocumented) AB 540 and first generation community college students to both juniors and seniors. The co-researchers took action on some of the recommendations they listed in their action plan from this research. The language appropriate workshops included a high school and community college workshop process: The high school workshop process included, a) Chicano/Latino Parent Informational Meeting, b) Learning to Navigate, c) On-line registration, d) What do I need to know as an (undocumented) AB 540 student, e) How to write my personal statement, f) How to apply for Financial Aid/Scholarships. In order to follow the process more clearly, I developed figure 1 that outlined the order of the workshops for high school students. In addition, the second process, figure 2 was developed for the community college students and their parents. The community college process included: a) What I need to know as a first generation and/or AB 540 student, b) Navigation workshop, c) Financial Aid & Scholarship workshop (for first generation), d) Resources & Options (for AB 540 undocumented students). Since I agreed with my co-researchers' action plan recommendations in chapter four to further validate their work we accomplished together, I developed figures to connect the intellectual constructs.

Introduction to Researcher's Theoretical Contributions

In this section I will discuss my theoretical contributions in the following areas:

a) validation, b) *el choque* see figure 3 on page 223, c) *Nepantlá* see figure 4 on page 224, d) the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom see figure 5 on page 225, and e) the Simultaneous Complex Process of Transformation see figure 6 on page 226, and f) Beyond *Nepantlá* see figure 7 on page 227. These figures outline how these components contribute to the empowerment of Chicano/Latino students as they become the social and spiritual activists for future generations, responding to the inequities in education through providing counter-forces to lessen the

achievement gap. I see myself contributing to Rendon's existing research on Validation Theory, and Anzaldúa's work on borderlands. Rendon's work, works hand in hand with Anzaldúa's on reclaiming the self by understanding and confronting *el choque*, and finding the middle space of *Nepantlá*; the final three contributions of 1) The Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom, 2) The Simultaneous Complex Process of Transformation and 3) Beyond *Nepantlá*; are entirely my own findings and visions of the process. Anzaldúa's work speaks to self empowerment while my work speaks to the community healing and shifting to empowerment together. My research adds to Anzaldúa's concepts of *el choque* and *Nepantlá*. My contribution to Anzaldúa's comes by not only the study itself but by explaining the process of the study and by providing what it looks like in the figures that I incorporated in this study. In chapter 4, I illustrate how present and prevalent *El choque* is in the co-researchers' lives and provide examples based on their experiences of the middle space of *Nepantlá*. Although *el choque* and *Nepantlá* are significant findings in my study, they are embedded as key stages in my Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom; the co-researchers' experience of these stages shifts their knowledge to wisdom.

Validation. Through Rendon's Validation Theory (2002), I found that fundamentally, culturally relevant and consistent validation of students' experiences builds confidence, makes education accessible, and increases learning. In my study, validation was the driving force for which PAR was the vehicle. Feeling validated raised the co-researchers' self-esteem, and helped them bridge the shifts within themselves from external factors to internal factors to *el choque* to *Nepantlá*, affirming the collective internal cycle of wisdom; it kept the co-researchers' motivation ignited. Validation was the response to the disease caused by the inequities in education, as a solution for healing and creating more opportunities for Chicanos/Latinos. Although validation was not part of my initial theoretical framework, I identified it in my

literature review as one possible solution to the inequities in education, and it is important to note how in this process, validating the co-researchers' experiences proved monumental. Through being validated, they were able to sift through the sub-conscious assumptions they had made about themselves regarding the external factors, assumptions that were oppressing them. Within the PAR process, I validated the co-researchers by demonstrating awareness of language, culture, environment, and community needs while integrating these things into my method. I validated their language by including their comments in their original language spoken. I validated their culture by including their own testimonies that depict the traditions and roles within Chicano/Latino culture. Validation was necessary at every juncture of their experience within the PAR process. This can be seen as a contribution to Rendon's Validation Theory, which encourages a specific approach, comprised of six principles (as noted in chapter 2) that enable and support non-traditional students to succeed and learn. As Validation Theory was what drove the PAR process, this study has illustrated how validation is applicable broadly in settings from school, family and society, and when present produces positive results and healing to the individual, his or her family, and the greater community.

The Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom. My study expands and further contributes to Anzaldúa's (1987) work of *Borderlands*. I outline how *el choque* accentuates the inner borderlands - borderlands that live within us and also need to be attended to and understood. My research demonstrated how the co-researchers shifted from an individual experience to a collective collaborative process of community healing together. Within my study the process also served to validate my self knowledge and that of my co-researchers which affirms the overall knowledge that Chicanos/Latinos have as a collective. The Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom is comprised of four stages – External, Internal, *El Choque*, and *Nepantlá*. With the

transitions from each of these four stages to the next, the co-researchers began a new cycle; collectively, these cycles lead to wisdom and empowerment. Figure 5 is the embodiment of the whole process – it illustrates not only where it ends but where it can begin again.

As individuals, we began the PAR process by analyzing the external factors. This involved unraveling the problem from the outside in and identifying the layers of challenges Chicano/Latino students face in the educational system. As they approached these external determinants to their academic success and failure, Chicano/Latino students revisited their past as a community. Together we walked through the inequities and fears they knew so well, validating their experiences.

This analysis of these external determinants of their academic successes and failures made clear that Chicano/Latino students internalized the messages they received from the external factors with which they lived. Through the dialogue and deep analysis of the external factors, the co-researchers experienced three significant outcomes as a community that I named: 1) community awareness, 2) community questioning, and 3) community creation. The co-researchers became aware as a community, which allowed them to become community questioners, questioning the inequities within the education system - and finally, community creators, creating an action plan that would help other Chicano/Latino students in high school and community college. They began as individuals who then transitioned into a community before they journeyed together to understand the internal factors that Chicano/Latino students face.

As depicted in the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom, figure 5, within the external stage I have identified – where Chicano/Latino students developed community awareness, became community questioners and then creators – Chicano/Latino students were identifying the

problem. At the internal stage, they began to identify the messages they had internalized, and came to understand their conflict and discover their internal strengths. Seeing their internal strengths more clearly led them to other internal discoveries of their hidden talents and capabilities. At this juncture of the process, the co-researchers' consciousness was heightened and their collective and individual voice was developed, which led to co-researchers developing internal motivations. By naming internal motivations, the individual becomes empowered; the co-researchers became living examples of this. This empowerment came from the constant validation they experienced within the process.

El choque figure 3 on page 223 points to an example of where the inner borderlands intersect in the triad (school, family, and society) and where values and cultures collide, creating an internal conflict. The diagram of *el choque* [collision] figuratively positions the student in the middle of overlapping borderlands that reflect what they are feeling and experiencing in life. For the co-researchers, the identifying and naming of the inner borderlands exposed a deeper awareness of this cultural collision; this deeper awareness ultimately permitted (and will continue to permit as the co-researchers begin to cycle through this process) the finding of *Nepantlá* (Anzaldúa, 1987 and Mora, 2008).

Figure 4 on page 224 of *Nepantlá* depicts how through ancestral practice my co-researchers came to better understand the middle (spiritual) space and how validation is the energy that drove them to reach *Nepantlá*. *Nepantlá* is known as the middle space – between each element of the triad (school, family, and society) within *el choque* – where marginalized individuals determine what works or doesn't from the discovered borderlands he or she lives within. From the middle space of *Nepantlá* individuals can select what values and beliefs they will keep from their experiences of the inner borderlands. Within this stage of *Nepantlá*, they are confronting

themselves and their psychological and emotional incongruencies, and through their knowledge they gain insight to better understand their anger and dissonance, whereby they start to create new goals in their mind where they can develop voice and internal power, initiating a paradigm shift both in their attitude and behavior. This paradigm shift liberates them from the demands created by *el choque*, bringing about healing. This in-depth understanding of each co-researcher's internal incongruency led to the paradigm shift. Within the Internal Cycle of Wisdom (figure 5) *Nepantlá* is still part of a cyclical process, but within this cycle, the individual can move forward and backward. Tonantzín revealed her discovery of these interconnections when she stated, "I realized that everything is all connected. It's not just one part of one issue or the other; it is all connected together like a puzzle". At this point, the individual can re-claim the self – it is with this re-claiming that hope emerges, and through hope, that internal motivation can be accessed. It is through validation that the individual confronts the underpinnings of *el choque*. Validation also provides the energy and ability that drives the individual to reach *Nepantlá*. In this middle space of *Nepantlá*, validation ultimately ignites the motivation that fosters wisdom.

For the co-researchers, undergoing the experience of *Nepantlá* led to their liberation to be free thinkers rooted in self and to the regaining of self-esteem. In general terms, this awakening liberates the individual to reclaim the self and their spirit as an aspect of healing; in my study, this awakening led the individuals to develop a holistic perspective, a broad awareness of the many interconnections among all of the external and internal factors in their lives. The process began externally but was ultimately navigated internally in tandem with the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom. This amounts to a continuous process of self-discovery and understanding.

The Simultaneous Complex Process of Transformation. The co-researchers underwent the PAR process in conjunction with the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom (see page 225); their engagement with these processes simultaneously, I named the Simultaneous Complex Process of Transformation (see page 226) – this contribution was a major finding of my research. The five phases in the PAR process include identifying the problem, generative themes, societal issues, collective analysis, and action plan. These five phases of PAR correlate with The Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom, comprised of the four stages listed above – 1) External, 2) Internal, 3) *El Choque* [collision], 4) *Nepantlá* – in addition to 5) the final stage (the product of these four) where an individual approaches Wisdom by confronting their experiences and unravels the incongruencies and challenges they face.

Research question 1 revealed that Chicano/Latino students face various external factors such as school, family and society, each of which brings along with it multiple sub-themes that affect students' academic success. Research question 2 revealed that Chicano/Latino students are affected by these external factors whereby they internalize the negative messages directed at them, impeding their academic success. More important, and less anticipated, were the discoveries they unveiled individually and as a community: for instance, a collective understanding of what Anzaldúa (1987) called *el choque* [collision]. *El choque* [collision] is created by the triad of school, family, and society; where these three join, they collide – at this point of collision one can access the middle space of *Nepantlá*. The whole transformative process is driven by constant validation that ignites the individual's motivation. Motivation is a key finding; in this case, it was primarily rooted in Chicano/Latino students' internal power, as demonstrated by my depiction of the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom. The Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom and PAR could both be understood linearly; however, an individual's

experience of them is not linear (for instance, an individual is often at different points in these two processes, and can jump ahead or go back and forth). As an individual community member undergoes both of these processes simultaneously (but sometimes non-linearly), they experience the Simultaneous Complex Process of Transformation.

Summary of contributions. Understanding these discoveries revealed the many lessons I learned within the process. As I observed the process of the co-researchers, I realized I had lived the same empowering experience. I came to better understand Validation Theory, *el choque*, and *Nepantlá* in a deeper sense. This deeper understanding helped me to define and elaborate on the context whereby others can transform and liberate their own experience. This could be used as a possible new direction to create supportive and equitable environments that foster learning through hearing others' diverse experiences. From this, I developed the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom to share with others what we experienced. As I reflected, I realized that the praxis was the aspect that I have in the middle space of *Nepantlá*, which provides a detailed account of what individuals underwent in this research transformative process. Through not only adding to the research, but also creating a new way for others to understand how Chicanos/Latinos experience education as they perceive it, I empowered the co-researchers and myself. Depicting and defining the Chicano/Latino experience of education validates and honors our history, knowledge, and overall contributions; integrating ancestral practices such as understanding *Nepantlá* through the PAR process into education can serve as a way to integrate the assets that Chicanos/Latinos' experiences bring to educational settings.

Researcher's Reflections

As a researcher, I witnessed actions that were beneficial in providing a specific approach that can assist in remedying the inequity in education and the lack of Chicano/Latino students'

academic success. Given the opportunity, Chicano/Latino students became co-researchers in this study. The co-researchers developed an action plan and implemented a part of it. The co-researchers learned new skills (public speaking, critical thinking, research, analysis, plan development, team work and organizing) and became more socially integrated into becoming future global ambassadors. The co-researchers established trust and, as a result, built a relationship with the researcher. The co-researchers provided support to a local high school to help other Chicano/Latino students better prepare for college. The co-researchers also utilized what the education system sees as a deficit (language), which they turned into an asset that enabled them to reach out to other Chicano/Latino students and their families. One of the co-researchers was selected to be the Team Ambassador and representative of the leadership team in a community agency that helps AB 540 undocumented students. To equip them with tools to persevere in the community college, the co-researchers were trained in PAR and team ambassador peer training.

The co-researchers shifted and became the change they wanted to see happen at their community college and in their community. They also developed a student organization on campus called *CAMBIO* [change] where they implemented their action plan as part of their mission. They also created language appropriate workshops both for high school and community college to help other Chicano/Latino students navigate and survive the education system. Within the process they created their social network and developed strategies to obtain educational tools in order to survive their own experience in community college (swapping books and buying used materials from others).

The co-researchers were encouraged to research and apply for scholarships during this process. The researcher supported them by writing letters of recommendation and editing their

scholarship essays. Some of the co-researchers were granted scholarships regardless of their barred immigrant status. Within the process, the co-researchers were encouraged to ask questions and share the information with the whole team as a way to develop voice. The co-researchers presented as a panel at a local high school in their community where they shared the barriers they have faced with other Chicano/Latino families of AB 540 undocumented and first generation students. They further presented their findings to the Puente Program students and will be presenting to the Chabot College administration as well as the Puente program English instructor and counselor. As the researcher I built relationships with the Chicano/Latino students, their families, the community college, and the Puente program. I served as a role model for the Chicano/Latino students who participated in the study. I discovered the process that we as Chicanos/Latinos underwent. From PAR, I charted and developed figure 5 that depicts the process, which I named The Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom.

This figure depicts how, fundamentally, each phase of the PAR process contributed to a deeper level of understanding. I then charted and developed figure 6, showing the steps and complexity of the whole experience, and encompassing the processes as well as the PAR process, which I named the Simultaneous Complex Process of Transformation that created the change. I discovered that through guiding Chicano/Latino students to understand their internal power, more change can be accomplished. As an agent of change, I validated the co-researchers throughout the process and encouraged their continued reflection on their own identity and integrity.

As a result of my findings, I anticipate serving in various capacities as a trainer, facilitator, and consultant. My focus would be to guide Chicanos/Latinos to embrace the process in efforts to make similar discoveries and changes for the communities they live in. However, something

to consider is what can go wrong in attempting to incorporate recipe interventions. For years we have been dealing with complex issues in an education system run by policies that exclude and segregate Chicano/Latino students from academic advancement. It is not enough to create a manual for this national problem in education.

Raising awareness regarding the problem is important, but my goal is to change the hearts and minds of the policy makers and Chicano/Latino students affected by the inequities of education. Therefore, the intervention must be one that is on-going and impacts the institutional structure through policy evaluation and measurement. I see my findings as an avenue to create change in the areas of training to better understand the entrenched policies that govern the following areas: high school, community college, the individual and programs. My goal is to facilitate academic success and incorporate ancestral practices through curriculum that advocates for college programs to honor the underserved, underrepresented, and underprepared Chicano/Latino students to succeed and become spiritual and social activists to serve as global ambassadors to the communities they will enter.

My co-researcher said it best: Zapata claimed that he left the process with more insight about himself and his classmates. “We are better analyzers, fue como un [it was like an] epiphany or un [a] metanoa. I believe it was a metamorphosis”. As the researcher, I experienced the Simultaneous Complex Process of Transformation (as depicted in figure 6) firsthand. I was privileged to encounter and be pushed to reckon with my own *choque*, and to discover that in order to present my findings with accuracy and authenticity, I had to ultimately practice moving myself Beyond *Nepantlá* (see figure 7 on page 227). The co-researchers, as they moved through the PAR process as well as through their own internal transformations, became living examples of the cyclical and holistic nature of this process of transformation.

Overall, this study was about empowering youth, developing voice, and reclaiming self from social injustices. In order to represent the findings of this study with cultural accuracy and integrity, I have, as a researcher, had to practice validating my own self and the cultural experience I share with the co-researchers. Through their process of defining *el choque* [collision] and *Nepantlá*, I have accessed important knowledge and wisdom within myself. I discovered, named and depicted The Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom, The Simultaneous Complex Process of Transformation and Beyond *Nepantlá* in order to validate my co-researchers and my own experiences of the overall process.

The co-researchers and I are all representative of people whose experiences can be examined, understood, and represented in an empowering way through applying Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory as a critical theoretical framework from a race perspective. Almost more significantly, however, within my literature review, I identified two theories – Deficit Thinking Theory and Acculturation Theory – that, along with race, class, and gender were embedded within the education system, inform the core of *el choque*, and express the inequities that Chicano/Latino students have faced throughout modern history and in present society.

In addition to these exclusionary theories, within my literature review I selected a theory that modeled an approach toward historical redemption, one that is inclusive of differences and imbues social and spiritual activism for marginalized communities such as Chicano/Latino students. Rendon's Validation Theory counters the deficit thinking theory in education, providing six steps to this approach that create new spaces within the environments Chicano/Latino students navigate in order to survive the various societal and educational injustices they must confront. Validation Theory does not require Chicanos/Latinos to sever

their cultural identity; more importantly, it recognizes their strengths and contributions to education and history. A significant finding in my study was the centrality of this theory of validation in understanding *el choque* and *Nepantla* within oneself and collectively.

Although Validation Theory was not part of my initial framework, I listed it in the literature review as a possible solution to the pervasive injustices that Chicanos/Latinos face. I agree with Rendon that this theory does help students navigate; more importantly, it honors their spirit as a human being. Looking closer, Validation Theory mirrors what Anzaldúa shares in *Nepantla* – what she calls *conocimiento* [knowledge], whereby in this middle space, remembering and utilizing ancestral practices brings spiritual activism to the forefront of healing. When utilized appropriately, collective communities are nurtured, affirmed and validated constantly by each other, through each other and from their collective experience. Validation theory demonstrates the same practice of Anzaldúa's *conocimiento* [knowledge], where it is presented as an aspect of Chicano/Latino students' experience of the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom; thereby validation theory became the driving force to this transformation in my study. At each cyclical intersection of the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom, there was a mirrored validation from the individual to the collective community, recognizing the internal power of Chicanos/Latinos. Therefore, the theoretical framework of CRT and LatCrit were just the platform to discover the necessity of employing Validation Theory as a solution to the global soul wound that needs to be addressed nationally in education.

Moreover, a complete representation of and collective communication of our life experiences as well as our experiences through this study also requires the application of intentional language that continues to validate the spirit and the student's holistic healing transformation (as is present in figures 5 and 6). As is clear through the students' words and

actions, life, as seen through their eyes, cannot be compartmentalized into discrete components. Even my division between external and internal determinants of their success did not necessarily resonate with the co-researchers' understanding of their own experiences, although it proved useful for me in communicating the processes I observed so that this experience may be ultimately translated into shared knowledge for healing and systemic change.

Researcher's Transformative Curriculum

In this section I will discuss how, as part of my own transformation, I developed my own transformative curriculum based on the findings of my research. I created a three bag process of 1) Bag of Excuses 2) "Handle it" Bag and 3) Bag of Hope, to demonstrate how, psychologically, we internalize the external messages from our experiences of school, family, and society. I intentionally brought these bags to life into physical form to help Chicano/Latino students and others understand what Chicano/Latino students and their communities are confronted with on a daily basis. This curriculum has intentional language, is inclusive, culturally sensitive, validating and truth-telling of the Chicano/Latino experience, and can be used in high schools, community colleges, staff development workshops, and the Chicano/Latino community.

I demonstrate that we must first understand the invisible bags of excuses, strategies for "handling" it, and hope that we carry with us. By turning the searchlight inward and reflecting on naming what is in each bag, then motivation and the desire to learn emerges. Within this bag process, I have applied my ancestral practice to deconstruct injustice, discrimination, poverty, and inequity. My goal through this process was to honor the Chicano/Latino students' experiences by showing others – teachers, counselors, administrators – how to apply the bags not only to their students but to themselves, to shift their mental paradigm and start on their journey of transformation. I believe that my transformation must demonstrate how I have applied what I

have experienced and learned in this process with my co-researchers. Throughout the many years in education, I have found that in order to help another person one must first help oneself. I have committed myself to knowing who I am, which guided me to begin deconstructing my experience of school, family, and society. As a result, I created this bag process to deliver my message of hope, which is to create systemic change in the systems we live within. I have refined my bag process method and connected it to the Chicano/Latino culture. To understand the invisible bags we carry, we must always revisit the past in order to heal the present generation. By doing this we shift and become present for ourselves. In that past, we must evaluate our truth of oppression, struggle, lies, history, and the soul wound in education. We must be conscious of what we are willing to let go of that does not belong to us. I created this bag process with the intention of using them for different audiences of professionals that work with Chicano/Latino youth/students and my community.

My bag process presentation begins with an exercise in making snap judgments, to elicit critical engagement with how deficit thinking is based on individuals' judgments of marginalized communities. Students are asked to judge me, and their responses are charted and revisited at the end of the presentation to demonstrate their inaccuracies. Then they are asked to judge an anonymous academic transcript, and again, their responses are charted and revisited. Students are asked to log the Latino ranking in education for them to see how they judge and understand where they stand within society. Also, they are provided with data regarding the problem in education. Then we begin the exchange of power. Students are asked to share why they go to school or college. Then they are asked what gets in their way. Their responses are charted and revisited. We then shift to the first bag to see if what got in the students' way was the same situations that got in my way. This encourages a more in-depth analysis of their own

experiences. I then ask them to compare the initial judgments they made about me with the contents of my bag. I would say that in the many times I have presented, 99% of the time, the judgments that the audience passed about me were wrong. Successfully obtaining a degree can mislead people; in this case, it has often led my workshop participants to underestimate the suffering, injustice, discrimination, and inequities that I faced.

Content and process.

- Bag of Excuses

In this bag, I talk about my personal challenges I faced that clearly depicted my *choque*. Issues of poverty, death, suicide, deficit thinking from my school, environmental issues, and family issues which include gender roles. These are the influences in our lives that we often make into the reasons for not succeeding, the things that keep us oppressed.

- “Handle it” Bag

In this bag, I demonstrate through symbols how we handle our bag of excuses as we have been taught in school, by family, and by society. I note that there are invisible, often negative ways that we handle situations in life, and then how the negativity of these choices has a great impact on the individual, psychologically, spiritually, and emotionally. The idea is to identify the methods we apply to handle our circumstances in order to change our mental paradigm to find solutions that are long term.

- Hope Bag

I created the bag of hope to demonstrate my shift to *Nepantlá*, and to enable individuals to see and confront the contents of their bag of excuses and their “handle it” bag. As the individual transitions through the bag of excuses and thinks about the real way in which they have handled their reality and pain, they can begin to discover how much their position in the

inner borderlands has obscured their vision of their own strengths, capabilities, and ultimate self-worth. The hope that emerges from this discovery enables individuals to dream again. We come to the reason for this research – to create opportunities of hope for future generations where we begin to look at the qualities and gifts that we bring from within ourselves. The process seeks to illuminate the talents and capabilities that Chicano/Latino students dismiss because of the conditioning they have received in school from lack of validation.

At the end of presenting all three bags we revisit the physical perception judgment and the academic transcript they judged and compare it to my bag of excuses – this illustrates the many ways they often misjudge me. This is when their attitude shifts; many question themselves about how they judged me externally and shift their paradigm regarding their judgment approach. Moreover, we can transform and create a new path when we seek the internal power already in us through our bag of hope. I close the process by encouraging Chicano/Latino students to create their own bag of hope as a method to validate themselves, through validating their gifts, talents, and capabilities that are neither seen nor honored by the education system.

Implementation and practice of the bag process. As discussed in the findings, as the co-researchers and I underwent the PAR process, I better understood *el choque*, and *Nepantlá*, but I discovered the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom, the Simultaneous Complex Process of Transformation and Beyond *Nepantlá*,. Whereas these discoveries happened over time, the bag process distills these findings, providing immediate opportunities for transformation to be set in motion. I have used this bag process personally, I have used it as a tool to empower educators to push past the status quo and empower students, and then I have used it directly with students throughout the system, in high school, community college, and university settings.

This bag process, in any single implementation, brings all those involved face to face with their mental model, through its transparency. Implementing this process within educational settings can serve as part of an effort to keep those running the education system accountable to their own process of transformation. This is my solution to the inequity in education to reduce the achievement gap for Chicano/Latino students. I developed and implemented this bag process in response to my research findings, as a method to approach difficult problems, problems that require a more in-depth analysis of *el choque* and how to shift to the middle space of *Nepantlá*. This process can serve as a model for education that empowers Chicano/Latino students.

Possible uses of the bag process. I have begun to utilize some of my findings in this way.

- I have utilized this method to share my own personal experience and growth and have refined it as I continue to heal psychologically, spiritually, and emotionally, through the course of this study, from the issues I myself faced in school, family, and society.
- This bag process could serve as a training tool to demonstrate how education can transform to increase engagement and learning of low performing and unmotivated students.
- This process could be utilized as part of my teaching method with underrepresented, underserved and underprepared Chicano/Latino students from middle school, high school, community college, and the university level as a way to bring their experience into the classroom.
- These bags could serve as the platform of my motivational talks for “at risk” youth to believe in themselves when others don’t. These tools could also be utilized with teen moms, youth in gangs, multicultural groups of youth, and youth leadership from various communities.

- The bags could serve as training tools for teachers and administrators as an example of how to better serve Chicano/Latino students. It is a method of empowerment that requires teachers and administrators to reflect on their deficit approach with this population and on how to shift their own mental paradigm from deficit thinking by using my example of success that shows how if Chicanos/Latinos are guided appropriately they can learn and transform themselves.
- The bags could also serve in intensive six-week trainings for Chicano/Latino parents to reflect and analyze their own experiences, to shift their paradigm from oppressed to empowered and become engaged in their children's education.
- The bags could also serve as a presentation tool in presentations to educators, administrators, or those who set policy. The bags can demystify the problems in the education system. The system itself has its own bag of excuses, its own "handle it" bag, and its own bag of hope. Addressing this validates Chicano/Latino students by revealing the complexity of how they are habitually excluded from their own education.

More importantly this bag process (of application) has a foundation bag process (of theory). The foundational theory that details what students go through when engaged in the PAR process is comprised of the stages of the a) External, b) Internal, c) *el choque*, d) *Nepantlá* and e) the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom, which leads to the Simultaneous Complex Process of Transformation. The bag process is also based on this foundational theory of this model for transformation. When students understand this foundational theory, they are able to see the stages that define their experience within the bag process and go beyond *Nepantlá*.

Both I as the researcher and the co-researchers demonstrated transformation through our creation and application of solution-oriented tools of empowerment. Through building and

testing these tools, we collaborated in bringing about change in equitable education for Chicanos/Latinos.

Final Summary: Beyond *Nepantlá*

Going beyond *Nepantlá* requires that the researcher along with the co-researchers both experience and understand the process (see figure 7 on page 227). Beyond *Nepantlá*, depicts how validation is the foundation for which the individual can transform from this process. First the individual must come to the realization of *el choque* in order to understand and then shift to the middle space of *Nepantlá*, as they are undergoing the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom. Beyond *Nepantlá*, is a process of healing, transformation and empowerment. Beyond *Nepantlá*, combines Anzaldúa's, Rendon's and my work as a possible solution for Chicanos/Latinos to succeed as a response to the inequity in education. The process is collective because all the co-researchers informed each other's journey through it, mutually providing input and establishing unity, solidarity, compassion, and validation of both each others' and their shared truth. Beyond *Nepantlá* is a space of increased consciousness and discovery, where confidence in self and hope can emerge in the students' lives once again. I validated their environment by taking a holistic approach that included the P.R.E.S.S. [political, religious, economic, social, and spiritual] aspects of their lives.

From this research process, I was able to add to the research. From the beginning, I worked collaboratively with the co-researchers to better understand the external and internal factors that were determinants of Chicano/Latino students' academic success. By validating and giving meaning to Chicano/Latino students' experiences through the PAR process, we developed voice and an action plan to continue championing Chicano/Latino student success. I discovered that the co-researchers and I not only underwent one conscious PAR process; as I reflected on

and analyzed our experiences. I realized that we were also simultaneously going through another process. I started to understand how validating and guiding them through this collective process carried them to a positive place within which to discover their internal power, a power that could motivate Chicano/Latino students out of a negative mindset to persevere and accomplish their dream. From my research experience, I was able to develop five figures *el choque*, *Nepantlá*, the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom, the Simultaneous Complex Process of Transformation and Beyond *Nepantlá* that depict the process of the specific parts of the process and the whole experience.

As individuals we all entered a collective process when we embarked on the PAR process, but we also experienced something even more in-depth and simultaneously together. Figure 5 at the end of this chapter is listed as The Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom, and depicts the whole process the individual undergoes. Figure 6 is listed as The Simultaneous Complex Process of Transformation, and depicts what happens on a group level within the PAR process and the research results from this process. Figure 7 combines *el choque*, *Nepantlá*, and the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom with the underlined foundation of Validation as possible solution in continuing the empowerment of the Chicano/Latino students and community. I created these figures to bring meaning, understanding and validation to the experiences of Chicano/Latino students.

What has become clear to me is that as I initially embarked on this process as a researcher, I was focused on the external and internal factors that Chicano/Latino students face within the community college, but what emerged for me, alongside the personal transformations of myself and my co-researchers, was a much larger pattern and issue. The process unveiled that after over forty years of educational reform, American society has failed in its practice of inclusion and

democracy. The education system is the only institution that all children will enter before they are tracked into paths that exclude them from opportunities. Furthermore, the education system becomes the agent of acculturation for some and forced assimilation for others. The resistance is demonstrated by Chicano/Latino students through their disengagement due to the lack of cultural inclusion. The mainstream of White culture of American society dictates the education system, and reinforces white privilege through entrenched policies, policies that neglect the unique needs of Chicano/Latino students and their families in society and education: policies such as 187, 209, Assembly Bill (AB) 540, and State Bill (SB 1070), that covertly uphold the inequities of race, class, and gender, pointing to the creation of a new underclass within American society.

Because of these exclusionary practices, Chicano/Latino students are faced with issues of poverty, discrimination and racism. These exclusionary policies will nullify access to education that has been guaranteed in written form, such as the California Master Plan (1960), which noted that access was to be given to all to receive an education. Education is becoming an exclusive commodity for the elite, a population from which Chicanos/Latinos continue to be excluded. Chicano/Latino students are still provided entry into K-12, but even at that level, students continue to be pushed out. Once they enter the community college or transfer to a four-year university the misconception of access is revealed. Some Chicano/Latino students are barred based on their immigrant status as part of the AB 540 provisions at the higher education level and others are denied resources. Chicano/Latino students who are first generation citizens with undocumented parents who have a language barrier also face similar challenges as the undocumented students, where they are expected to understand policies that govern financial access. Although the student may speak the language of English, they still have to serve as the conduit to re-educate parents; this situation places extensive expectation on these Chicano/Latino

students, reversing their role as student and child within society. In addition, a common thread amongst the co-researchers was an awareness of and experience of the fear that is created from the lack of understanding of one's individual rights for both undocumented students and their parents.

Culturally, Chicano/Latino parents place a great value in education and see the teacher as the second parent; however, in Western society, the parent is expected to know how to navigate and guide their child through the various systems of education and society. The lack of awareness of this expectation on the part of members of society, family, and school, places undue responsibility on the Chicano/Latino student. As a result, Chicano/Latino students get lost in the education system early on because they are left to navigate the education system alone at a very young age. These students are set up to fail since they have guidance neither from the school nor from their parents. They are caught in the middle of two institutions of school and family that do not communicate with each other.

The present state of education provides evidence of the inequity and inadequate information and services that Chicano/Latino students continue to receive. The message the education system is conveying to the Chicano/Latino community is that it does not care about this student population. The education system is not dealing with the specific needs of Chicano/Latino students. In their efforts to attempt to find a solution, students are lumped together with those with language needs, lack of motivation, those with truant behaviors and attendance issues. All students are tracked and labeled with the one-size-fits-all approach. This type of inadequate intervention creates an environment that is not conducive for learning within the classroom and assists in the development of a new underclass in society. Chicano/Latino students have no choices of where they will be tracked and what label will be attached to them

based on their testing results. Moreover, the Chicano/Latino students' parents' lack of understanding of the education system places a double burden on the student who has to figure things out for themselves as well as for their parents.

Even more significant are the negative perceptions that continue to exist within the education system and larger American society where Chicano/Latino students still confront the subtleties of discrimination and racism. For example, the perceptions of counselors and teachers who view Chicano/Latino students as deficits instead of assets in the education system continue to create environments of failure. Chicano/Latino students also live through the exclusion and rejection that their parents experience in society. They have to deal with their parents' fears surrounding their own undocumented status. Chicano/Latino students' parents experience societal inequities that exclude them from services and deny them work. Remaining uneducated perpetuates falling prey to American society. The fact that undocumented parents work does not mean that they are given the best opportunities. Chicano/Latino parents' low wages place them and their families in impoverished communities located near schools with limited resources. These impoverished communities are usually environments with high crime rates and high levels of violence and poverty, and these communities therefore tend to be feeders to the prison system instead of the education system. Chicano/Latino students feel hopeless and disempowered because just as the education system determines their path, American society determines their undocumented parents' path. Students are overwhelmed psychologically, emotionally and spiritually due to the inequities that exist both in the education system and American society.

Although the State of California public school system has a brown face (Gándara and Contreras, 2009), at 48% students of color, its productive outcome has a white face; this, along with the high incidence of Chicano/Latino youth who are pushed out of education before college,

demonstrates the racial disparity that continues in education as part of the class structure of society. This national educational catastrophe we are living through can be dealt with by guiding Chicano/Latino students to discover their internal power to effectively impact the inequities in education. The hope and motivation come from the youth who, in this study, analyzed a problem and searched for equitable cost effective solutions that benefited various communities such as a local high school, a community college, the Puente program, the co-researchers, and their families along with the researcher. Solutions can be found by community members who are living out the effects of the injustices meted out by the education system. These solutions can produce efforts to address the national catastrophe that Gándara and Contreras speak to for Chicanos/Latinos, and more opportunities that create spaces of growth and learning to harvest new global ambassadors as social and spiritual activists who can pose solutions for the inequity they live through on a daily basis – solutions that will further the cause of divine social justice. Ya Basta!

Chicano/Latino High School Workshop Process

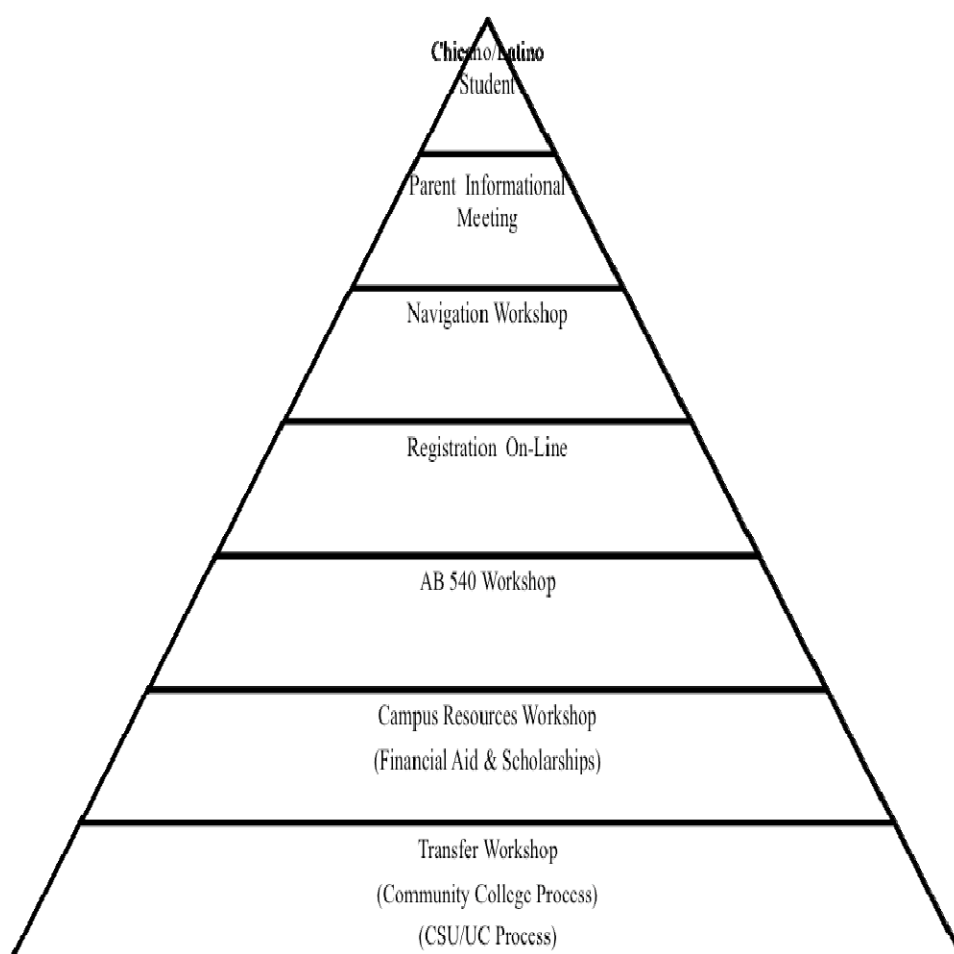


Figure 1: Outline of High School workshop pyramid and services to be provided to Chicano/Latino students.

Chicano/Latino Community College Workshop Process

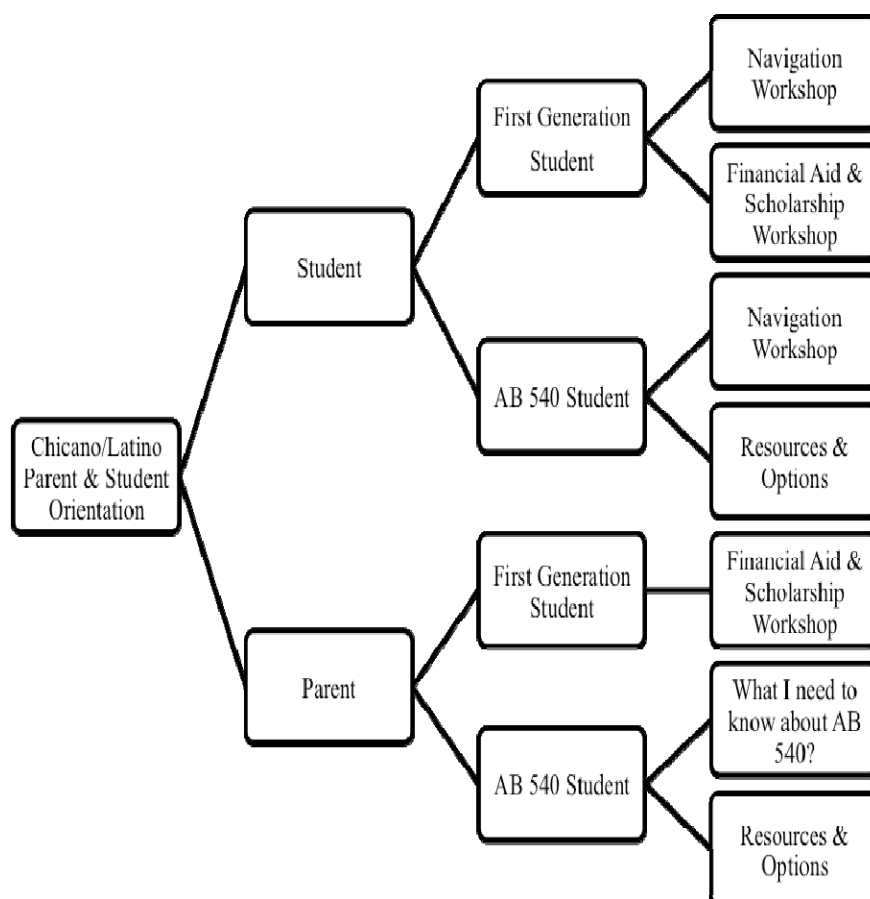


Figure 2: Outline of services for 1st generation and AB 540 Chicano/Latino students at the Community College level.

EL CHOQUE ***[Cultural Collision]***

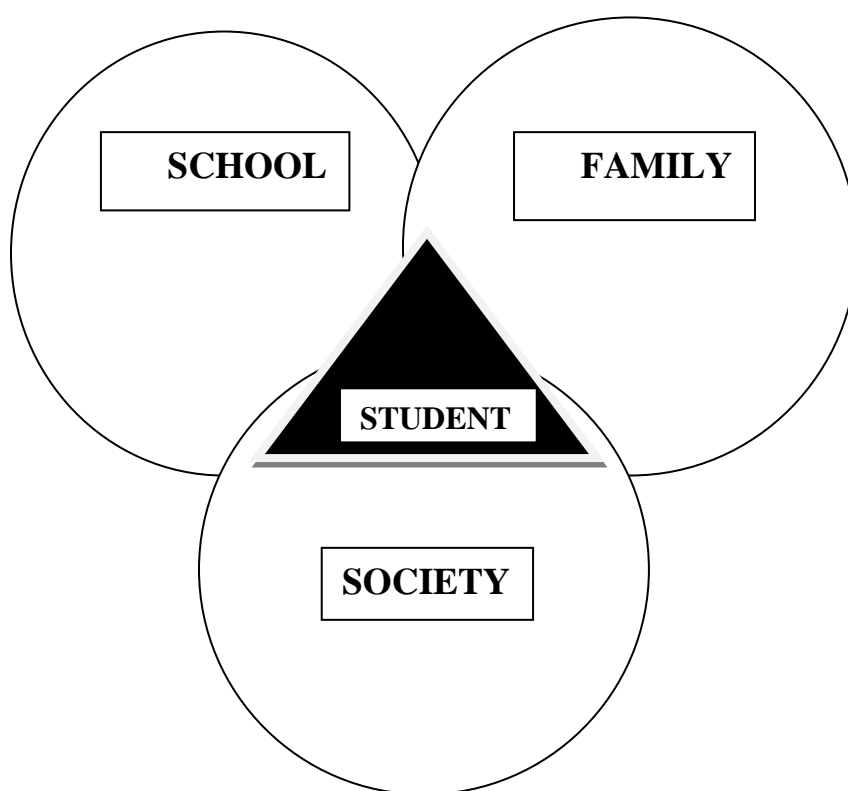


Figure 3: Triads of (school, family and Society)

NEPANTLÁ

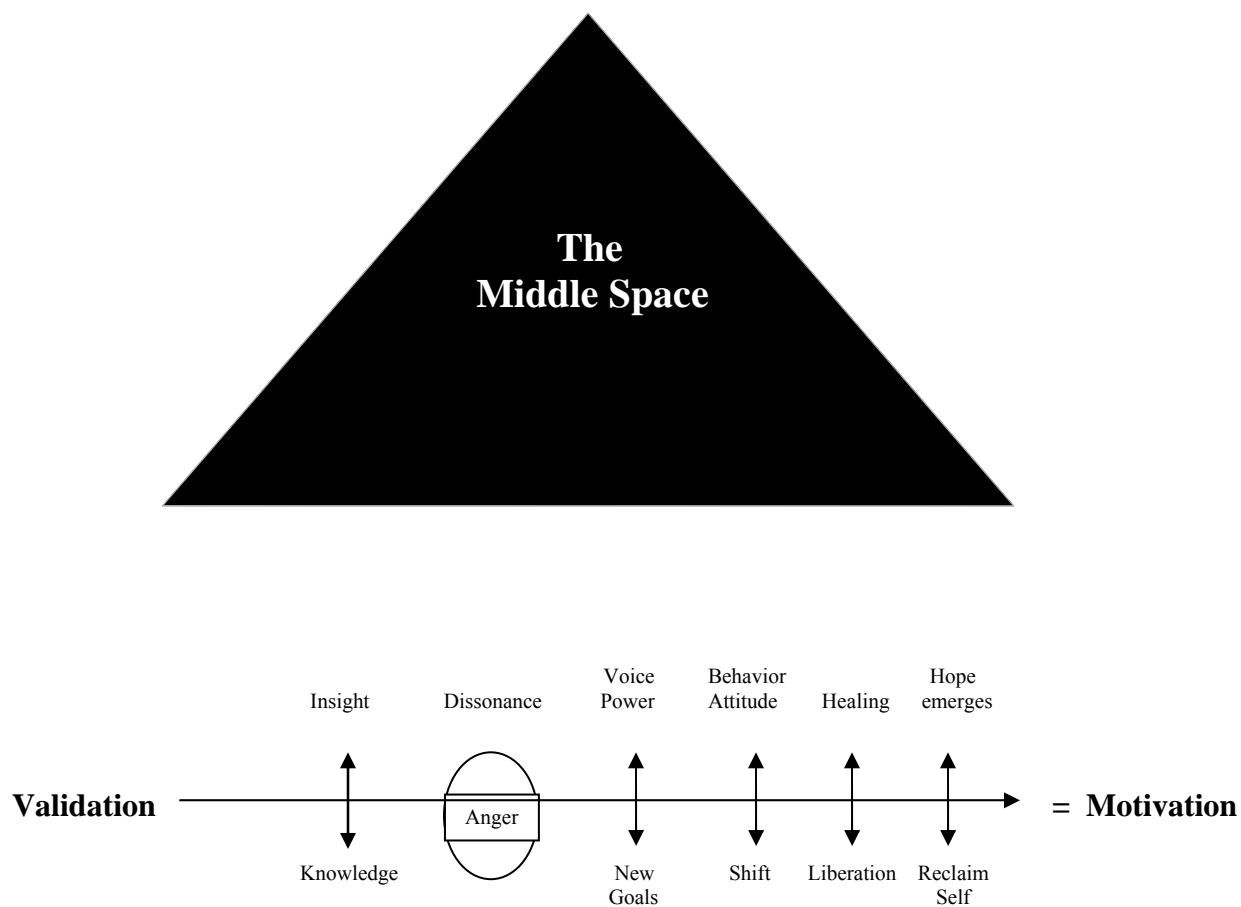


Figure 4: The process of what students undergo in the middle space of Nepantlá and how validation is the driving force to increasing students' motivation to learn.

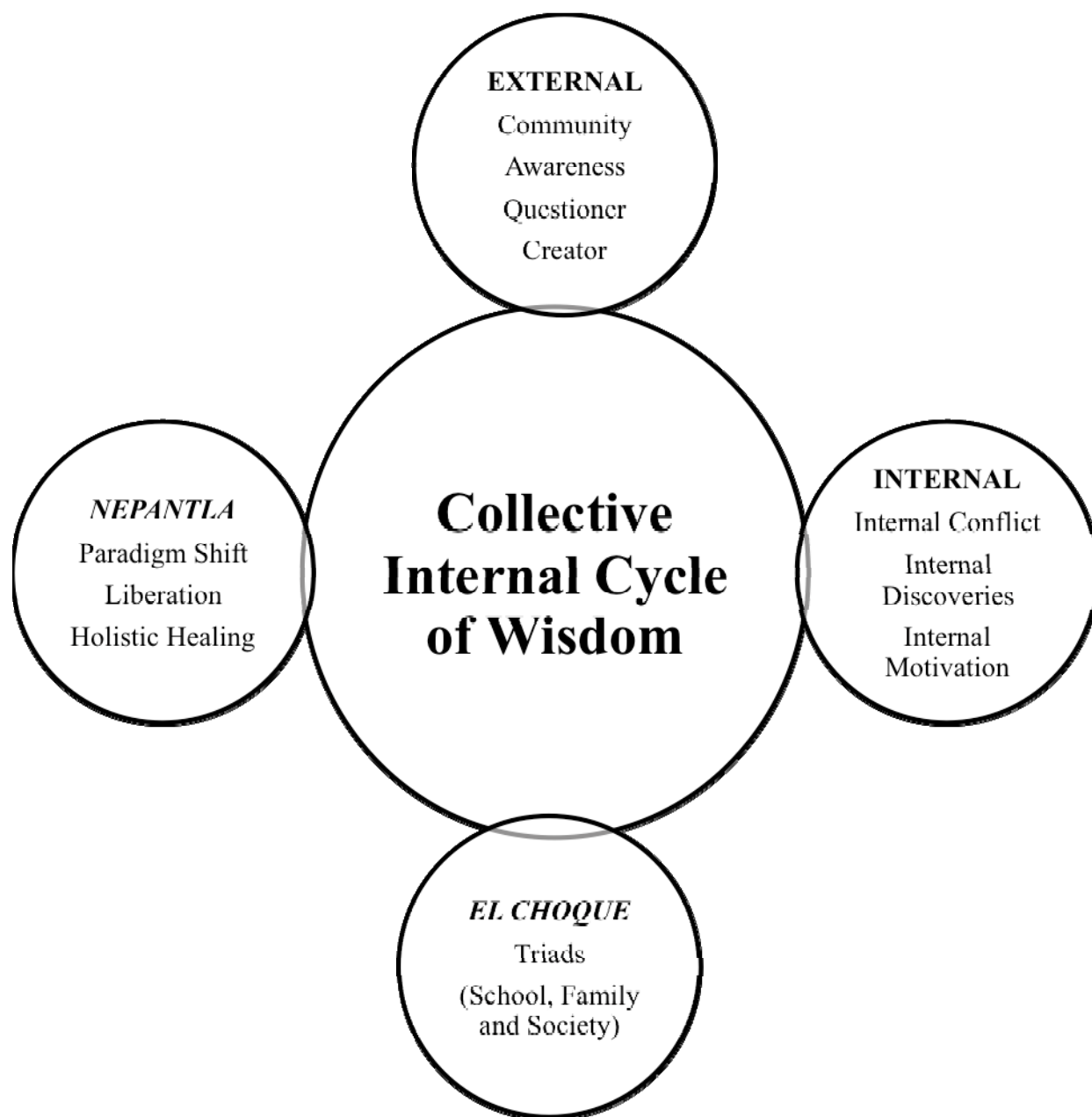
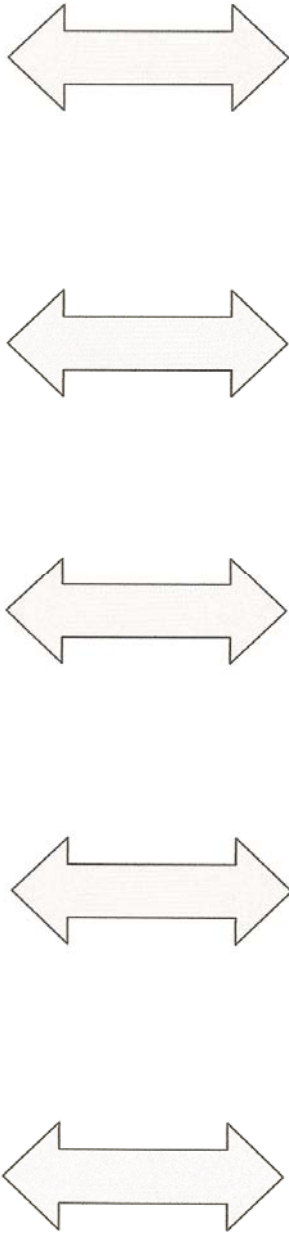


Figure 5: The Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom

Simultaneous Complex Process of Transformation

PAR PROCESS

Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV	Phase V
Identify the Problem	Generative Themes	Connect to Societal Issues	Collective Analysis	Action Plan



RESULTS

External	Internal	El Choque	Nepantla	Wisdom
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Figure 6: The participants undergo this simultaneous complex process

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BEYOND *NEPANTLÁ*

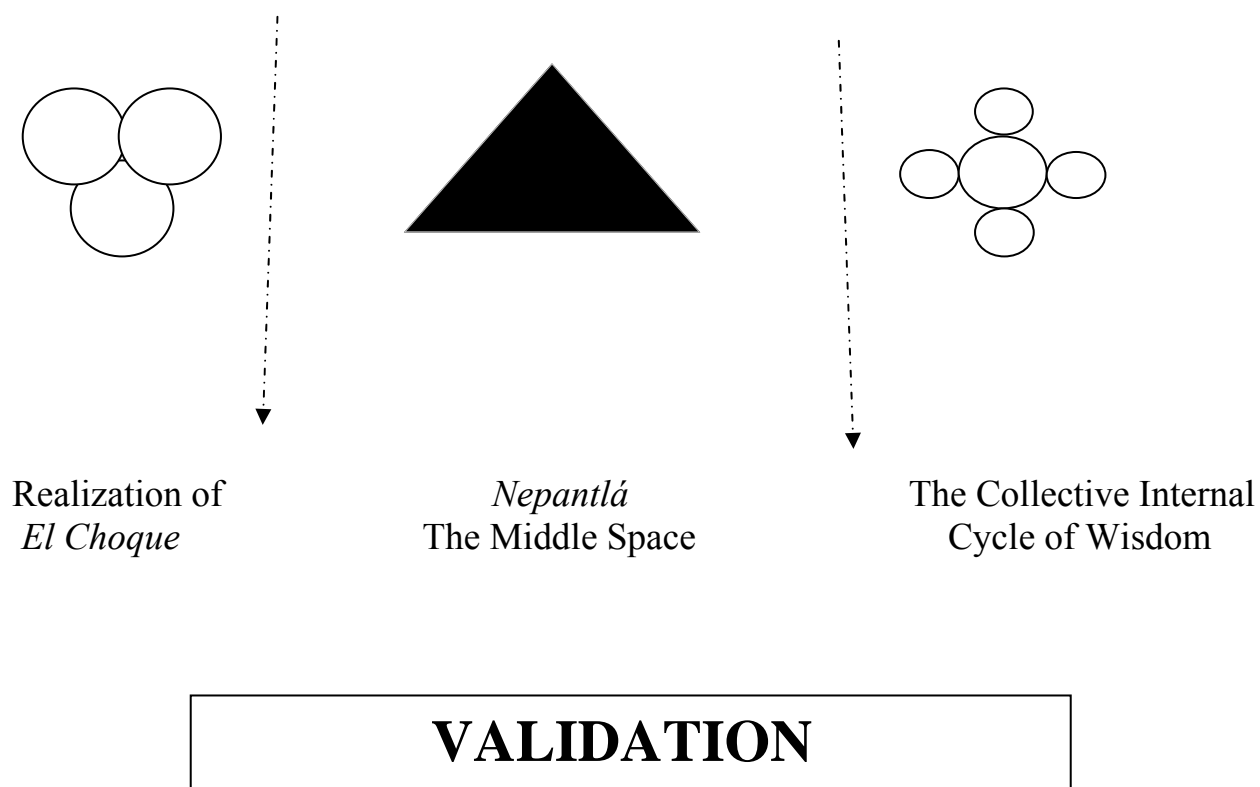


Figure 7: Beyond *Nepantlá* depicts how validation is the foundation for which the individual can transform him or her self. First they realize *El Choque* then they shift to the middle space and revisit the process in the Collective Internal Cycle of Wisdom.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
LETTERS REQUESTING PERMISSION
FOR STUDY AT SITE

September 22, 2008

Chabot College
Attn: Ms. Angie Magallon
Puente English Instructor
Hayward, Ca. 94704

Dear Ms. Magallon,

I am a student at the University of San Francisco in the International & Multicultural Education Doctoral Program. My reason for writing is to request access of Chabot College data and students in the Puente Program.

The focus of my research is to investigate the perceptions of Chicano/Latino students' experiences in relationship to the external and internal factors that support and or impede their academic success in a retention program at a community college.

Students in the Puente Program will be invited to participate in the study. All participants will be provided with an informed consent from and student rights. The participants will be informed of the following: confidentiality, their right to decline responding to questions and the freedom to withdraw from the study at anytime.

All the data collected from the study will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Pseudonyms will be utilized to protect the identity of the participants. Their names will not be utilized in any report of publication resulting from this study. Participatory Research will be the methodology utilized to perform this study. The students will also be informed that the study is voluntary.

I have attached a brief overview of the statement of the problem, purpose of the study and my research questions for your review. Your prompt attention in this matter will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you. I can also be reached on my cell (650) 219-5874 or by email at lichavez@peralta.edu.

Sincerely,

Lilia Chavez, M.S.

September 22, 2008

Chabot College
Attn: Mr. Ramon Parada
Puente Counselor
Hayward, Ca. 94704

Dear Mr. Parada,

I am a student at the University of San Francisco in the International & Multicultural Education Doctoral Program. My reason for writing is to request access of Chabot College data and students in the Puente Program.

The focus of my research is to investigate the perceptions of Chicano/Latino students' experiences in relationship to the external and internal factors that support and or impede their academic success in a retention program at a community college.

Students in the Puente Program will be invited to participate in the study. All participants will be provided with an informed consent from and student rights. The participants will be informed of the following: confidentiality, their right to decline responding to questions and the freedom to withdraw from the study at anytime.

All the data collected from the study will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Pseudonyms will be utilized to protect the identity of the participants. Their names will not be utilized in any report of publication resulting from this study. Participatory Research will be the methodology utilized to perform this study. The students will also be informed that the study is voluntary.

I have attached a brief overview of the statement of the problem, purpose of the study and my research questions for your review. Your prompt attention in this matter will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you. I can also be reached on my cell (650) 219-5874 or by email at lchavez@peralta.edu.

Sincerely,

Lilia Chavez, M.S.

APPENDIX B:
LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT FROM DEAN OF INSTRUCTION



October 10, 2008

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
University of San Francisco
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Dear Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Chabot College, I am writing to formally indicate our awareness of the research proposed by Lilia Chavez, a student at the University of San Francisco (USF). We are aware that Ms. Chavez intends to conduct her research by administering a survey and by interviewing our students.

As the Dean of Language Arts at Chabot College, I give Ms. Chavez permission to conduct her research on the Puente Program at Chabot College.

We are interested in hearing student voices and in supporting the needs of our Chicano/Latino students, and we hope Ms. Chavez will present her findings to Chabot College at the conclusion of her study.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my office.

Sincerely,

Marcia Corcoran

Marcia Corcoran, Ph. D.

Cc: ✓ Angie Magallon, English Instructor, Puente Co-Coordinator
Gerald Shimada, Dean, Special Programs
Celia Barberena, President

LANGUAGE ARTS DIVISION

25555 Hesperian Boulevard, Hayward, CA 94545

tel 510.721.6804

www.chabotcollege.edu/languagearts/

APPENDIX C:
LETTER TO RECRUIT STUDY PARTICIPANTS

APPENDIX C
Recruitment Letter
University of San Francisco

Date:

Dear Participant;

I am a doctoral student at the University of San Francisco (USF) in the International and Multicultural Education program.

My reason for writing is to invite you formally to participate in a research study. The focus of my research is to investigate the perceptions of Chicano/Latino students' experiences in relationship to the internal and external factors that support and or impede their academic success in a retention program at a community college.

As a participant, you will be provided with an informed consent form and student rights. You will be informed of the following: confidentiality and the right to decline responding to questions and to withdraw from the study at anytime. There is a risk of discomfort or anxiety due to the nature of the questions asked. It is possible that some of the questions may cause you to feel uncomfortable, however, you always are free to decline to respond to any questions you do not wish to answer.

You will not be reimbursed for your participation in this study, nor will you incur any cost to you. There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this research.

It is imperative to note that your participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate in this study or not will have no influence on your present or future status as a student.

If you chose to participate in the study, you will complete a demographic/stress questionnaire. In addition, you will meet with me six times. Phase I will begin with an informational meeting. Phase II will be the first two-hour group process dialogue. Phase III will be a two-hour group process dialogue. Phase IV will be a two-hour code and analyze emerging themes group process. Phase V will be a two-hour action planning group process. The final meeting will be a one-hour closure group process. At each meeting, your reflections will be discussed. You will be provided with questions to guide the dialogue.

Our discussion will not be limited to the questions that I provide you. The dialogues will be taped recorded and transcribed after each meeting. You will receive a typed copy of our group process, which you can edit and change. Your name will be kept confidential at all times. Only I will have access to the files.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please sign the consent form and return it in the self-addressed envelope enclosed. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at lchavez@peralta.edu or on my cell (650) 219-5874. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Lilia Chavez, M.S.

APPENDIX D:
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to investigate the perceptions of Chicano/Latino students' experiences in relationship to the external and internal factors that support or impede their academic success in a retention program at a community college.

The Background and Need for the Study

A fundamental shift to educating the majority and not just the elite minority needs to occur in the educational pipeline. Researchers (Gándara, 2000; Gandara and Contreras, 2009; Ginorio & Houston, 2001; Kever, 2009, Schwartz, 2001; Valencia, 1999, 2000; Valenzuela, 2002; and Yosso, 2006) asserted that, to change the inequity in education, identifying the problem is not enough. An emphasis must be placed on the development of programs that inspire and provide a positive atmosphere, with distinctive cultural and academic support that meet the needs of Chicano/Latino students. Darder (1997) and Stanton-Salazar (2001) elaborated that it is imperative to recognize the inequalities that exist in society and that, because of this, leaders are needed to find solutions for the benefit of Chicano/Latino students. This study is needed because of the inequities within an educational system that is insensitive to the specific needs of Chicano/Latino students, who are the largest and least educated minority group within the state of California and its public education system. Therefore, it is important to include language and methodologies that best address the life experience of Chicano/Latino students. In addition, to succeed with regard to Chicano/Latino students, community college administration and faculty must develop methods to allow students to find their voice within the discourses of the mainstream society.

Procedures

If I agree to be a participant in this study, the following will occur:

1. I will be asked to meet with the researcher six times for one informational meeting and five group sessions.
2. I will participate in one informational group session for one hour. The total time commitment is 12 hours.
3. I will complete a demographic questionnaire.
4. The researcher will observe my class.
5. The purpose of these meetings will be to dialogue with the researcher about the internal and external factors that support or impede the academic success of Chicano/Latino students in a retention program at a community college.
6. I will not be limited to just dialogue about the research questions.
7. The dialogues that I participate in with the researcher will be audio taped.
8. The researcher will provide me with a transcribed copy of our dialogue, which I am allowed to edit and change.
9. No portion of my dialogues with the researcher will be included in the study without my approval.

Risks and Discomfort

I am aware that I might have some emotional discomfort in reflecting on my personal and educational experiences, but I am aware that I can decline any questions to which I do not wish to respond. I can also stop my participation in this study at anytime. I will be provided the opportunity to edit and change all my personal material. I also understand that the participatory research process can be extensive.

The main risk in this study is loss of privacy. In this process, sharing personal and educational experiences may expose how Chicano/Latino students think and make decisions. To minimize any potential risk, the participants' real names will not be published in the study. The materials will only be accessible to the researcher.

The participants will be provided confidential status. All information, including tape recordings, transcripts, and computer disks containing research information will be stored in a secured, locked file cabinet. The tape recordings will be destroyed after the completion of the study or after a year, whichever comes first. In addition, the researcher cannot guarantee that individuals within the group will not violate the confidentiality of other members in the group. The researcher will remind the participants of the importance of confidentiality.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits for participating in this study. I may get to know myself better and understand how I can help myself as a Chicano/Latino student to succeed regardless of the problems that I confront.

Costs/Financial Considerations

There will be no financial costs to me as a result of my participation in this study.

Payment/Reimbursement

I will receive no payment or reimbursement for my participation in this study.

Questions

If I have any question, comments or concerns, I may call Ms. Lilia Chavez at (650) 219-5874 or email her at lhavez@peralta.edu at anytime. For any questions that I may have regarding my participation in this study, I must first contact the researcher; but I also have the choice of contacting the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091. I can also leave a voice mail message or fax (415) 422-5528 or email IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or I can write IRBPHS Department of Teacher Education, Education Building, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, Ca. 94117-1080.

Consent

I have been provided a copy of the Research Subject's Bill of Rights, along with this consent form for my files. My participation in this research is voluntary. I know that I am free to decline or withdraw my participation from this study at anytime. My decision to participate in this study or not will have no influence on my present or future status as a Chabot college student.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

Subject's Signature

Date of Signature

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date of Signature

APPENDIX E:
PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

Research Subjects' Bill of Rights

The rights below are the rights of every person who is asked to be in a research study. As a subject I have the right:

1. To be told what the study is trying to find out;
2. To be told what will happen to me and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice;
3. To be told about the frequent and/or important risks, side effects, or discomforts of the things that will happen to me for research purposed;
4. To be told if I can expect any benefit from participating, and, if so what the benefit might be;
5. To be told of the other choices I have and how they may be better or worse than being in the study;
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study;
7. To be told what sort of medical or psychological treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all or change my mind about participation after the study is started; if I were to make a decision, it will not affect my right to receive the care or privileges I would receive if I were not in the study;
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form; and
10. To be free of pressure when considering whether I wish to agree to be in the study.

If I have other questions, I should ask the researcher or the research assistant. In addition, I may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach IRBPHS by calling (415) 422-6091, or by email at IRBPHS@usfca.edu or by writing to USF IRBPHS, Department of Counseling Psychology, Education Building, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94117-1080.

APPENDIX F:
RESEARCH & DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

RESEARCH & DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1) What external factors do Chicano/Latino students perceive as determinants of academic success/failure?

- What is it like to be Chicano/Latino in your college environment?

2) What internal factors do Chicano/Latino students perceive as determinants of academic success/failure?

- What on-campus resources do you have to help you succeed academically?
- What off-campus resources do you have to help you succeed academically?
- How would you describe your college environment?
- Is there any link between your cultural values and the values you have at school? If so what are they?
- How do you manage the difference of your school and cultural values?
- Does the ethnicity of your instructor make a difference in your interest or success in the class?
- What happens when you have a problem at college or at home?
- What happens when you have a problem with your family or friends?
- What strategies do you use to cope with your problems?

3) What motivates Chicano/Latino students to succeed?

APPENDIX G:
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Questionnaire

Instructions:

Please respond to each item by checking or filling in the answer that best describes your experience.

1. Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Age: _____
3. Years of education: start with Kindergarten _____
4. Did you attend a public or private school? Yes ☐ No ☐
 School Name: _____
 Highest grade completed in High School: _____
 Did you start college right after High School: Yes ☐ No ☐
 Have you taken time off from your education: Yes ☐ No ☐
 if yes, how much time: _____
 How did you hear about the program you are in now: _____
5. What is your academic major? _____
6. What is your educational goal? AA/AS ☐ Certificate ☐ Neither ☐
7. What four-year university do you plan to transfer to? _____
8. What is your academic standing? Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Unsure ☐
9. Where were you born? _____
10. The first language you learned to speak? _____
11. What language do you prefer to speak? _____
12. How many languages do you speak? _____
13. How do you identify your generational status as:
 1st generation ☐ 2nd generation ☐ 3rd generation ☐ Immigrant ☐
14. Ethnicity: (Include if identify as bi-racial) _____
 Hispanic (Spaniard) ☐ Cuban-American ☐ South-American ☐ Central-American ☐ Puerto Rican-American ☐ Mexican ☐ Mexican-American ☐ Chicano ☐
 In what culture did you grow up in? _____
 How many years did you spend in this culture? _____
 How many years were you schooled in this culture? _____

15. Where were your parents born?

Mother _____ Father _____

16. What was your parents' level of education?

Mother _____ Father _____

17. How many brothers & sisters do you have? _____

18. How many of them have attended college? _____

19. Where were your grand-parents born?

Maternal

Grandmother _____ Grandfather _____

Paternal

Grandmother _____ Grandfather _____

20. What was your grand-parents level of education?

Maternal

Grandmother _____ Grandfather _____

Paternal

Grandmother _____ Grandfather _____

21. What is your socioeconomic status?

Lower ☐ Lower Middle ☐ Middle ☐ Upper Middle ☐ Upper ☐

22. Who is your main support in your life? _____

23. How many of the following factors apply to your life this semester?

_____ Married

_____ Single parent (# of children _____)

_____ Divorced

_____ Working Full-time ☐ Part-time ☐ Unemployed ☐

_____ Who do you live with?

Parents _____ Single parent _____ Family _____ Friends _____ Roommates _____

Partner _____ Spouse _____ Shelter _____ Homeless _____

- _____ Transportation stress
- _____ Relationship stress
- _____ Inter-racial stress
- _____ Emotional stress
- _____ Substance issues
- _____ Rehabilitation program
- _____ Financial Issues (Debt, loans, basic needs)
- _____ Family stress (Raising family members, caretaker for ill parent etc.)
- _____ Personal illness stress (health-physical, mental and emotional)
- _____ Deaths (i.e., Family, spouse, parent, siblings, friends, etc.)
- _____ Psychological stress
- _____ Language barrier
- _____ Racial stress
- _____ Immigration status stress
- _____ AB 540 stress
- _____ Religion stress
- _____ Issues with the law stress (i.e., Jail, fines etc.)
- _____ Academic stress (i.e., tutoring, Math, English, etc.)
- _____ Achievement stress (i.e., Motivation, procrastination etc.)
- _____ Learning Disability stress (i.e., IEP)
- _____ Other factors not listed _____

APPENDIX H:
PROTECTION OF THE HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

Lilia Chavez

From: irbphs [irbphs@usfca.edu]
 Sent: Monday, November 24, 2008 7:54 AM
 To: Lilia Chavez
 Cc: shimabukurog@usfca.edu
 Subject: IRB Application # 08-086 - Application Approved

November 24, 2008

Dear Ms. Chavez:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #08-086). Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS.
Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP
 Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

 IRBPHS - University of San Francisco
 Counseling Psychology Department
 Education Building - 017
 2130 Fulton Street
 San Francisco, CA 94117-1080
 (415) 422-6091 (Message)
 (415) 422-5528 (Fax)
irbphs@usfca.edu

<http://www.usfca.edu/humansubjects/>