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Documenting the Experiences of Gay Latinos in Higher Education through the use of Testimonio

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DOCUMENTING EXPERIENCES OF GAY LATINOS IN HIGHER EDUCATION USING TESTIMONIO

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ABSTRACT

"Documenting the Experiences of Gay Latinos in Higher Education through the use of *Testimonio*"

This qualitative study focuses on the stories of six self-Identified Gay Latinos in a higher education. The participant's stories are documented using *Testimonio*. The six men were uniquely situated to give their *testimonios* about their campus experiences of seeking support in that they were the narrators of the experiences. Key findings indicated a pipeline of support which began with supportive families. Multidimensional identity was well defined by the participants as understanding of being both Latino and Gay. The participants, while exploring campus spaces for support, found themselves navigating through one identity or the other resulting in a process of *selective identity*. Ultimately, the participants made decisions about safe-supportive spaces based on how they identity. Certain spaces such as LGBTQ resources did not meet their multidimensional needs. All participants found support with one or more campus resource from which they could identify as Latinos, but not necessarily as Latino and Gay men. The *testimonios* in this study allowed for deep exploration of the participants campus experiences of support. Their stories allowed for a theoretical analysis through the frameworks of Critical Race theory, Latino Critical Theory, and Queer Critical Theory. These stories can serve to inform higher education about the needs of LGBTQ students of color.

Keywords*: Critical Race Theory, First-Generation Student, Latino Critical Theory, Selective Identity, Queer Critical Theory, Testimonio*

SIGNATURE PAGE

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation 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 presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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When I decided to pursue a college education, at the age of 30, I took my family by surprise. That was 19 years ago. All this time they have supported me. Understood when I had to miss holidays, funerals, and birthdays. So to my family, I am ever grateful. Especially to my mother Jenny from who, I know, I inherited the tenacity to finish what I start. My friends deserve my gratitude as well. You have all supported my journey with encouraging words and cheers of "You got this!"

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Finally, my great appreciation and gratitude to my participants. Their stories are inspiring and helped me to learn about a whole new layer and lens from which to view higher education resources for LGBTQ students of color.

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Introduction

Gay men of color experience racist attitudes coupled with homophobic behavior within the university environment (Stevens, 2004). Therefore, navigating oppression in the form of racism, heterosexism, and heteronormativity is especially difficult for Gay men in institutions of higher education. As an openly Gay Latino man having completed an undergraduate as well as graduate degree, I have first-hand experience of oppressive campus climates. I have noted that in more than a few classrooms and offices how racism and heteronormative privilege operate. In almost every instance, the experiences led me to feel discouraged, isolated, and alienated. For example, I interned in a Biology lab as an undergraduate and often asked professors questions such as, "How many Latinos graduate from this department?" The responses were essentially as follows, "I don't understand the question." To me, these kinds of responses indicated an evasion of the question. Furthermore, once the other lab interns and the head researcher (all male) became aware I was Gay, their demeanor and attitude was significantly more cautious and somewhat unfriendly. Experiences such as the one I described left me feeling isolated and alienated. Most significantly, I became critically conscious of the multiple ways sexual orientation and race/ethnicity intersect in the academy.

While research addressing racial and cultural climates on college campuses has increased, there are still limited studies that specifically focus on the experiences of queer Students of Color, specifically queer Latino students. Institutional experiences of Latino students tend to be generalized under terms such as "incongruent" with the academic

norms of the White middle-class and juxtaposed with academic persistence of the White dominant academic culture (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005). For underrepresented Latin@s (Latinas/Latinos), especially if they identify as Gay, their institutional experiences can be one of isolation and alienation (Bordes, Sand, Arredondo, Kurpious, & Rayle, 2006). Thus, as a queer student of color, the struggle to succeed in college is shaped by experiences as a racial/ethnic minority as well as sexual orientation (Misawa, 2005). This research intends to contribute to the field of education by focusing on the experiences of Gay Latinos in higher education, with specific attention on support service accessibility.

I have been an academic advisor for over seven years. Some of my past and current advisees (over 700 in total) have influenced this study. After two academic years, or eight semesters, I became cognizant of certain patterns. Every academic year since my first cohort in fall of 2008, there has been at least one Freshman Latino male sitting in my office explaining how he does not know why he feels so lost and disconnected, isolated. In most of these cases, the student has shared he feels he does not fit in, and his first year at a university is not what he expected. Additionally, these same students express difficulty in making friends and approaching faculty. The anguish in the voices of these students resonates with me on a personal level. Therefore, because I am personally and professionally connected to what has been expressed by former and current students, I was compelled to complete this study.

My role as an academic advisor precludes me from asking questions about advisee's gender identity, sexual orientation, or relationship preference. On the other hand, if the student freely shares this information, then I can engage and attempt to

provide a safe and supportive environment for the student to share their experiences. Rarely has a Latino male advisee shared he is Gay. The student may not self-identify as Gay but in the description of his experiences, I can detect he may be experiencing many of the same experiences I have. What resonates most are the same feelings that I experienced as a young adult, feelings of isolation and alienation coupled with the realization that *I am Gay*. There were many instances when I had thoughts of self-doubt and internalized feelings of inadequacy and lack of self-worth. Now, in my practice, I see first-hand how the climate of the academy contributes to or exacerbates the marginalization of these students to whom I relate. These students struggle daily to navigate a system that for many of them is unfamiliar (Misawa, 2006). According to Kumashiro (2001), the creation and sustainability of a democratic educational setting is not easy because educators and students come against many forms of oppression, specifically racism and heterosexism.

My concern for the well-being of Gay Latino students and an interest in examining the factors involved in this phenomenon positioned me to be introspective and reflective about how my own experiences have shaped the trajectory of my life. After considering the research possibilities concerning *why* Latino males leave institutions of higher education before matriculating, I came to the realization that I was an example of the very same phenomenon. In fact, I am a high school drop-out who at age of 19 left college after one semester. As a Gay man of color, the need for support at home and in the academy became apparent. Moreover, there exists a general lack of narratives from Gay Latino men within Student Affairs, higher education practice, and scholarship. Consequently, I began formulating how to implement *testimonio* as a methodology to

document, explore, analyze, and better understand the personal and academic experiences of Gay Latino men in higher education.

Professors, academic advisors, and many other professionals can serve a vital role in the overall educational experiences of Gay Students of Color in higher education. An important aspect of that role is providing a safe and supportive environment. For example, administrators commonly believe that academic support services are beneficial when utilized by students. However, little is known about the use of academic support services among Latin@ students (Torres, Reiser, LePeau, Davis, & Ruder, 2006). Once administrators, faculty, and staff begin to understand how environmental factors, such as race and culture intersect with sexual identity, they are better equipped to construct environments that embrace Gay Students of Color and assist them in their efforts to develop skills, intellectual capacity, and intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies.

It is my hope that this study contributes to identifying and developing support systems for Gay Latino males or any students who feel unsupported, alienated, isolated, and unable to focus on academics. This study is a way to intervene on behalf of Gay Latino students in order to prevent them and other queer Students of Color from leaving college before matriculating. This study links the experiences of support to a theoretical framework so their *testimonios* may serve to increase retention of Gay Latino males in higher education. However, the process that hinders confronting homophobia and heterosexism in higher education lies within the system itself.

Statement of the Problem

Oppression in higher education in the forms of inequality, discrimination, and marginalization in adult and continuing education is a field of study promulgated by past

and current scholars. However scholarship on markers of sexuality and sexual orientation are lacking (Grace, 2001; Hill, 2004). Additionally, scholarship on racism, homophobia, and support structures (or lack of) for Gay Latino males within higher education is most often devoid of personal accounts or testimonials. Past and current research often over generalizes and omits the role that race/ethnicity also play for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Students of Color. For example, Jagose (1996) states, homophobia and heterosexism function in such a way as to create non-inclusive and unwelcoming campus climates for Gay people. Saenz and Ponjuan (2008) address the issue of decreasing higher educational attainment for Latino males. However, this poignant scholarship examined norms of Latino culture and gender norms as opposed to a broader dialogue including Gay or Lesbian Latin@s. In addition, research which includes matters of policy and leadership also fails to include the experiences of Latin@ LGBTQ students (Rodriquez & Oseguera, 2015).

The gaps and minimalizing of LGBTQ Students of Color voices in higher education, with a specific focus on scholarship about Gay Latinos, results in a lost opportunity to learn about how their identities result in experiences of marginalization in the academy. Discourse that may develop from hearing these absent voices can help address marginalization and oppression for these students. As a result of oppression on college campuses for Gay students, they are discouraged from coming out in subtle and not so subtle ways (Dilley, 2002). Moreover, this study supports the assertion which argues as a result of their multiple identities, Latino Gay men are uniquely positioned to advocate for the creation of communities and cultures that embrace them (Kumashiro, 2001).

Within the context of this research, what is apparent is that LGTBQ Students of Color often segregate themselves. This is, in some part, a result of student organizations' lack of culturally inclusive practices which are overlooked or, in some cases, ignored by the institute. I am using the term *culturally-inclusive* to discuss the queer community of color as a culture. In order to create culturally-inclusive and understanding academic environments, faculty and staff and indeed students need to be aware of and more sensitive to the needs of Gay Students of Color and their experiences. One way to accomplish this is to create discursive spaces for Gay Latino students to share their narratives. In particular, this study focuses on the intersections between culture, race, and sexual orientation with a specific focus on Gay Latino males. In this manner, educators and the larger field of education can improve not only pedagogy, but also policies and practices by having access to these student's voices/stories (Misawa, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was two-fold. First, I wanted to document *testimonios* of Gay Latino men in a higher education setting. I use the central tenets of critical race theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework from which to analyze their experiences of support or lack of support on a university campus. Specifically, I used two specific offshoots of CRT for the purposes of this study: Latino critical race theory (LatCrit) and queer critical theory (QueerCrit). Second, I wanted to contribute to addressing the paucity of scholarly literature linking race, class, and gender with academic and/or social support for Gay Latino males in higher education.

Background and Need for the Study

In a review of relevant research, it was apparent scholarship specific to the experiences of support for Gay Latino men in higher education was limited. Although there has been research on the role of race and racism in academia, literature that explores the intersections of race, gender, and sexual orientation, specifically as it pertains to Gay Latinos, is limited (Almaguer, 1993). There has been an increase in the use of *testimonios* as a methodological tool in the field of education. However, the use of *testimonios* has largely focused on the experiences of Chicana/o and Latina/o communities in the US and is largely being utilized by Chicanas and Latinas (Delgado-Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012). A need exists to add personal narratives of Gay Latino men to the body of critical scholarship. Therefore, this study examined the ways in which the campus climate, organizations, classroom instruction, and counseling (to name a few) either offer support or hinder participation and academic success of Gay Latino students.

This study also has the potential to inform the field of education about the broader issue of decreasing number of male Students of Color within institutions of higher education. For example, Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) have identified the extant research literature is almost silent on Latino males and their educational pathways into higher education. Specifically, they state, "Latino males are effectively vanishing from the American higher education pipeline" (p. 54). According to an *Excelencia in Education* report, there is also relevant census data that show the Latino male educational crisis is more dismal than ever (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Gloria, Castellanos, Scull and Villegas (2009) reveal from 1974 to 2003 18- 24 year old White and African American males and females and Latinas increased their postsecondary education matriculation rates. On the

other hand, Latinos were the only group whose participation declined from approximately 27% to 22% (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2005). Moreover, in 2010, 13% of Latin@s, 25 to 29 years old, completed at least a bachelor's degree. In comparison, more than half (53%) of non-Latin@ Asian young adults have at least a bachelor's degree and nearly 39% of White young adults completed a four-year degree (NCES, 2011).

In 2012, Latin@s comprised 16.9% of the overall U.S. population. Also, they represented close to 1 in 4 children under the age of 18 (23.1%), a proportion that increases to 1 in 2 in states like Texas, California, and New Mexico (Pew Hispanic Center, 2014). In less than 20 years, close to 1 in 3students ages 5 to 24 will be Latin@ (Tienda, 2009). With a growing young population of Latin@s and the potential contribute to the U.S. labor force, improving the educational retention and success of the Latin@ population is imperative.

Beishke, Eberz, and Wilson (2000) state educational programs, pedagogy, and purpose influence how learners perceive homophobic and heterosexist feelings toward their sexual orientation, which in turn impacts learners' lives. Dilley (2002) suggests environments that are negative towards gay men discourage them from coming out and may lead to low self-esteem. Indeed, the climate of mainstream universities reinforces heterosexism in their learning environments, with many professors inculcate their practice with heterosexist norms (Dilley, 2002; Misawa, 2006). One example of the effect of heterosexist practice in the classroom is from a participant in a study conducted by Misawa (2005):

> I never really felt included as a gay man of color in any classroom, at least not in a public manner. Math classes get too deep into the

> subject to become personalized, but there is absolutely NO mention made in those classes about non-white contributions to mathematics. (p. 310)

According to Gloria, Castellanos, Scull, and Villegas (2009) what is prevalent within extant research are social and cultural issues as well as poverty, socioeconomic status and stereotypes, affecting persistence in higher education as it is relates to men of color. Gloria et al. also note, "Because a comprehensive conceptual and empirical literature based on male Latino's experiences in higher education simply does not exist…" and that "this presents a limitation for scholars and practitioners" (p. 318). Castillo et al. (2006) completed a study of the university environment and Latino@ identity as it pertains to persistence attitudes of Latinos. The researchers found overall Latino@ college retention rates based on academic preparation and achievement do not predict college tenacity of Latinos. Models of student retention and recent studies have pointed to non-cognitive factors, such as social, environmental, and inter-personal, to explain Latino academic persistence (Castillo & Connolly et al. 2006; Gloria et al., 2005; Fuertes & Sedlacek, 1994). The contextual layers and intersections of racism, heteronormativity, heterosexism and the roles they play on campus environments required exploration and analysis. Therefore, by examining research regarding support or lack of support in the classroom space and outside of it, practitioners will be better informed.

It behooves institutes of higher learning to understand how environmental factors such as racism and campus environment interact with sexual identity and heterosexism, shaping the experiences of students who are members of groups that have been historically disenfranchised and marginalized. Subsequently, administrators, faculty and staff can proactively construct environments that embrace Gay students and support and

guide students who wish to define their sexuality (Misawa, 2006). In order to create such environments and offer safe spaces maintained by positive reinforcement and support, administrators, faculty and staff in higher education need to be more aware and sensitive to students' lived experiences, engaging in *listening* in order to understand the discourses of others instead of *listening* to argue against or dismiss them.

Educators and campus communities need to be more inclusive in their practice and how students experience the campus climate. According to Misawa (2006), "One effective way to learn more is to listen to the experiences of their students in an effort to better understand their identities as well as their social and cultural connections both positive and negative to higher education" (p. 258). I, therefore, concluded that for this study one way to effectively listen to the experiences of students was to document their stories or *testimonios*.

Testimonio writing has a long and varied history; it is most often perceived a discursive exercise centralizes marginalized voices to elicit a sense of solidarity from the reader (Bernal, 2002). Unlike the more common training of ethnographic researchers to produce unbiased knowledge, *testimonio* challenges objectivity by situating the individual in communion with a collective experience marked by marginalization, oppression, or resistance (Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012). The *testimonios* provided in this study can indeed serve as institutional, personal, political, and social resistance against forms of oppression such as racism and homophobia.

In a pilot study I conducted in November 2011, I documented the *testimonio* of Victor. Victor's account of not feeling supported academically or socially as an openly Gay Latino first in his home surroundings and second as a freshman at the University of

California, Santa Barbara provided the impetus to continue my line of investigation. The pilot study, along with my personal and professional experiences, affirmed homophobia and an unwelcoming campus environment necessitate students maintain aspects of their identities which make them feel whole, balanced, accepted, and respected. This idea is exemplified by the following *testimonio* excerpt from Victor:

> I knew of gay/lesbian organizations and we had queer resource center and you know LGBTQ Alliance. But I don't know. I never pursued that avenue, I never brought out specific things that were just Gay or just queer… I mean I knew, I knew who I was it was just difficult, difficult to be that person and you know I was very quiet and shy person. When I was growing up living in Salinas, it was pretty difficult. You know my dad and I had a falling out when I was in freshman year. He basically said that I wasn't his son anymore and that he didn't want anything to do with me and I was my mom's, you know, responsibility. (Personal communication, April 16th, 2011).

Victor's *testimonio* excerpt is a concise example of what is captured in this study. The pilot study allowed me to conduct preliminary analysis and also validated my focus on documenting the *testimonios* of Gay Latino men to explore their experiences of support, or lack of support, in higher education.

Research has suggested Latino students' perceptions of prejudice and discrimination on campus negatively affects educational aspirations and increased withdrawal behavior (Cabrera, 2009; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993; Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2006; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). It is my hope this study motivates more administrators, faculty, and staff to develop ways to counter oppression in higher education that leads to isolation and alienation of Gay Latino men.

Theoretical Framework

This study applied critical race theory (CRT) and its extensions as a theoretical framework from which to analyze the higher education experiences of Gay Latino students. I used CRT as the primary theoretical approach due to its centrality of race and use of counter narratives (Parker & Lynn, 2006). I also selected two extensions of CRT, namely Latino@ critical race theory (LatCrit) (Bernal, 2002) and queer critical theory (QueerCrit) (Misawa, 2010) to form the theoretical underpinnings for analyzing the intersections of sexuality, race and gender which I felt were imperative in identifying ways of challenging oppressive campus environments. The following section explores more in-depth each of the components of the theoretical framework.

Major Tenets of Critical Race Theory

CRT was first conceived in the mid-1970s as a response to the failure of critical legal studies to adequately address the effects of race and racism in U.S. jurisprudence. CRT developed initially from the work of legal scholars Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). CRT is described by Matsuda (1991) as:

> The work of progressive legal scholars of color who are attempting to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that work toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination. (p. 1331)

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) extend Matsuda's definition by providing a framework or key elements of CRT with a specific focus on education and pedagogy. The authors delineate five central tenets of CRT.

CRT supports *the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination*. This includes the intersection of other marginalizing factors (Russell, 1992). Solórzano and Yosso, (2002) describe these marginalizing factors as gender and

class, among others, with racism being central to analysis. Pertinent to this study is the intersection of CRT, pedagogy and the experiences of queer Students of Color. Intersectionality, in this case, involves interrogating how power structures in higher education and identities, molded by race, class, gender, sexuality, etc., shape social interactions and relationships (Anderson & Collins, 2015).

CRT provides a *challenge to the dominant narrative* within education. The dominant narrative includes stories that are continually perpetuated through societal institutions like the government, education system, and media obfuscating how oppressive policies and practices perpetuate the marginalization and disenfranchisement of groups and individuals (Calmore, 1992; Solórzano. 1997). The authors also claim that this dominant narrative is mere camouflage for other dominant interests groups in the US. CRT also focuses on *commitment to social justice* and emphasizes how minority groups can engage in acts of political and social resistance to become empowered (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). For the purposes of the present study, a commitment to social justice is exemplified through the inclusion the voices of Gay Latino men.

CRT is vital to *a centrality of experiential knowledge*. Lived experiences and the influence of these experiences are envisioned by critical race theorists as assets rather than deficits (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In the same manner, this study illustrates how experiential knowledge of Gay Latino men can be an asset. CRT provides *a transdisciplinary perspective*. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) state CRT methodology in education has its roots in ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law, and other fields. A transdisciplinary perspective facilitates a critical analysis of the ways racism, sexism, and classism frame the experiences of people

of color as well as engage in constructing counter narratives (Stovall 2006; Solórzano & Yosso 2002).

In particular, CRT is about the endemic nature of race/racism in the US. CRT shifts public discourse to acknowledge race as a significant factor in external human development and in social constructions of contemporary society including the social implications of heteronormativity and homophobia (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Misawa 2006). Central to the present study, CRT addresses the multidimensional identities of the participants, especially with respect to their experiences in higher education. Freire (1970) posited education, as a practice of freedom, allows for reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. This research explores how race matters in education, coupled with the significance of gender and sexuality with the hope of creating campus climates that are accepting and inclusive (Grace & Hill, 2004; Johnson-Bailey, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Maher & Tetreault, 2001). In order to practice freedom, according to Freire, one must understand what freedom encompasses. Furthermore, education must move forward and address the heterosexual and homosexual binary; a momentum which QueerCrit fundamentally powers (Misawa, 2010). Moreover, when CRT is extended to include QueerCrit and LatCrit anti-oppressive discursive spaces are constructed and sustained. In these spaces, racism combined with heterosexism to expose how homophobia operates in and out of the classroom.

LatCrit

As an extension of CRT, LatCrit is concerned with emphasizing coalitional Latin@ pan-ethnicity and addresses issues as class, language, gender and sexuality, immigration status, ethnicity, and culture (Espinoza, 1990). Therefore, LatCrit provides

a substrate from which the above issues can be viewed as intrinsically linked. Solórzano and Bernal (2001) posit the five elements of CRT intersect with LatCrit.

Solórzano and Bernal (2001) argue class and racial oppression do not account for oppression based on gender, language, or immigration status. CRT and LatCrit intersect within the framework of education by challenging traditional claims of the educational system such as objectivity, meritocracy, and color-blindness. Transformational student resistance questions the dominant narrative which drives the educational system to address the education of Chicanas and Chicanos (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

The intersection of CRT and education can be examined using the theoretical framework of LatCrit so that a social justice discourse of CRT is focused on Students of Color such as Latin@ cultural issues of oppression within education. In their analysis of resistance, Solórzano and Bernal (2001) incorporate experiential knowledge of Chicano and Chicana students by drawing from oral history data and counter storytelling. To connect CRT and LatCrit, the authors ground these two theories using empirical data from 1968 East Los Angeles school walkouts and the 1993 struggle for a Chicana and Chicano Studies Department at UCLA (Delgado, 1995b, 1996).

A LatCrit focus on social justice for practitioners in higher education openly acknowledges, influences and motivates their work based on a desire to eliminate all forms of subordination in higher education. In other words, “A LatCrit social justice practice enables a director of campus activities to develop programs, services, and practices that are explicitly designed to target, for example, the elimination of racist or heterosexist stereotypes about Gay or Lesbian Latinos” (Villalpando, 2004, p. 45).

QueerCrit

QueerCrit allows for the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, language, and immigration (Hayes, 2014). Emerging from gay and lesbian studies, QueerCrit extends beyond the boundaries of gay lesbian identity and scholarship. The normativity and assumptions of relationships, identity, gender, and sexual orientation are subject to critique through a queer theory framework. What the concept of QueerCrit seeks to disrupt and challenge traditional modes of thought with the goal of scrutinizing and dismantling them (Meyer, 2007). Britzman (1995), a prominent queer theorist, explains:

> Queer Theory offers methods of critiques to mark the repetitions of normalcy as a structure and as a pedagogy. Whether defining normalcy as an approximation of limits and mastery, or as renunciations, as the refusal of difference itself, Queer Theory insists on posing the production of normalization as a problem of culture and of thought. (p. 154)

Misawa (2006) also provides salient background on QueerCrit. Misawa states, "QueerCrit is a technique for analyzing social texts with an eye to exposing underlying meanings, distinctions and relations of power in the larger culture which produced the texts" (p. 182). Analyses of these social texts reveal complicated cultural issues related to the regulation of sexual behavior that often results in the oppression of sexual minorities (Sheared, 2010).

Misawa (2006) also asserts homophobia and heterosexism create non-inclusive and unwelcoming environments for Gay people. Misawa defines homophobia as the irrational fear and hatred of gays and lesbians. On the other hand, heterosexism includes attitudes, bias, and discrimination in favor of opposite sex relationships and sexuality. It can also include the presumption that other people are heterosexual or opposite sex relationships are the norm and superior (Dilley, 2002; Jagose, 1996; Misawa, 2006).

Similar to other CRT related theories QueerCrit allows for even deeper exploration of the intersectionality of race, class, gender, sexuality, language, and immigration (Hayes, 2014).

Kumashiro (2001) argues, "Queer Theory, like much of gay and lesbian studies, has left issues of race largely untouched" (p.197). Kumashiro's argument suggests a need to investigate how the intersections of race, culture, and heteronormativity have significant impact on experiences and interactions within higher education. A full development of these theoretically intersecting frameworks allows for an understanding of how individuals are situated within a myriad of oppressive social and educational systems. Analyzing these intersections provides an opportunity to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of campus climates. Inclusive, safe campus climates can exist for Gay Latino men. However, this is predicated on first exploring their experiences on using a QueerCrit framework (D'Augelli, 1989b; Rankin, 2003; Rhoads, 1995). Critical examination of race and sexuality on college campuses requires a distinct understanding of QueerCrit and queer theory. It is important to note how QueerCrit differs from queer theory. Whereas the former does not discount racial identity, the latter can be limiting in its acknowledgment of the sometimes racialized dimensions of queer discourse.

The one caveat for this researcher is that *culture* can now include sexual orientation and identity, not just race. Gallagher (2003) identifies 164 historical definitions of culture. For the purposes of this study, culture is: a social heritage; provides a structure for living together; and includes tangible and intangible aspects of the human environment created by human beings themselves. Suffice it to say, LGBTQ People of

Color create and express culture in ways that are unique to their experiences and simultaneously critique hegemonic power (Misawa, 2010). This research provides an avenue towards cultural acknowledgment leading to freedom from marginalization, oppression and violence for members of the LGBTQ community.

Race matters in education (Johnson-Bailey, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Maher & Tetreault, 2001; Misawa, 2006) as does sexual orientation (Grace, 2001; Hill, 2004). Understanding of various types of inequality, discrimination, and marginalization based on individual positional markers like race, gender, and class have been extensively disseminated by social scientists including educators and scholars in adult and continuing education. However, significant intellectual discourses on the positional markers of sexuality and sexual orientation are limited (Grace, 2001; Hill, 2004).

Queer theorists emphasize critical examinations of both race and sexual orientation in society through the perspectives of Gay and Lesbian scholarship (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). Delgado and Stefanic also state that Gay and Lesbian scholars in critical race theory began to create a body of queer jurisprudence. QueerCrit examines whether antiracist literature and movements incorporate the heterosexist bias that marginalizes and excludes the concerns, perspectives, and voices of Gays and Lesbians of color.

When applied to the field of education, specifically higher education CRT, LatCrit, and QueerCrit allow for a distinctive perspective regarding the intersection of race and homophobia for Queer People of Color who often transition between social groups that concentrate more on race or on sexual orientation (Misawa, 2010). It is the *testimonios* which may have potential to reveal other ways in which to understand the

impact of these lived experiences. Hence, exploration and analysis of narratives of Gay Latino men in higher education illustrates how Queer People of Color are empowered as they develop critical awareness of their lived experiences and develop the capacity to construct oppositional identities.

Research Questions

The following research questions form the basis of inquiry:

1. How do the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality play out in the experiences of Gay Latino male students in college?
2. What types of support systems or lack thereof, are reported by Gay Latino men in a higher education setting?
3. To what extent can *testimonios* of Gay Latino men inform administrators, faculty and staff in higher education about issues of racism and homophobia?

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The delimitations of the study includes the exclusive participation of Latino males. Another delimitation is the narrow focus on participants still persisting in college and the inclusion of a single campus. A small sample size is a limitation in many studies. However, for the purpose of this study, unique and specific information was sought and not intended to be generalized to a larger population.

Educational Significance

This study has the potential to contribute to the field of higher education in areas such as ethnic studies and queer studies. Faculty, staff, and administrators will have access to documented experiences of support (or lack of) by Gay Latino men on their college campus. These experiences of academic and social support or lack thereof for

Gay Latino men in higher education informs the field of higher education about cultural understanding, sensitivity, marginalization, oppression, and the importance of inclusivity.

Gay Latino men, through their *testimonios*, inform educators of the importance of support systems for Queer Students of Color. Administrators, faculty, and staff can potentially develop strategies which can more holistically address this specific student population. This study has the potential for future research regarding male Latinos in higher education in general. Furthermore, this research can potentially extend to more Students of Color and the diverse communities within the LGBTQ community. Finally, the present study addresses a gap within the extant literature regarding Gay Latino men and higher education. Analysis and critical application of CRT and its extensions, LatCrit, and QueerCrit, along with *testimonios* illuminate oppressive learning environment. The interrogation of this type of environment reveals how alienation and isolation in higher education exists for those without dominant heteronormative privilege (Misawa, 2010).

Ethical Considerations

The autoethnographic nature of this study lends itself to specific ethical considerations (Creswell, 2008). The researcher understands when interpreting another individual's life experience the interpretation can be altered if certain considerations are not given. IRB approval was granted in January 2015 (See Appendix A). I fully disclosed of the purpose of this study to the six participants. This was accomplished through providing signed informed consent forms outlining the rationale and purpose of the study and making clear participants had the right to discontinue participation in the study (Appendix C).

Researcher's Background

I grew up in an impoverished Latino neighborhood in San Jose, California. My mother's family immigrated to the US via the Juarez Mexico-El Paso Texas corridor. My understanding is that my maternal grandparents and their children were migrant farmworkers who lived on and off trains, following different harvesting seasons. I have great passion for my family background, from the traditional foods I make to music. I would be remise to not recognize, to their credit, the very resilient and determined women in my family: my mom, my tías, and my abuela Piedad.

My main nemeses as a child were the expectations placed on me by my family: the expectation to be masculine, to marry a woman and have children. The taunting and verbal abuse, presumably to make me more masculine and fulfill those expectations, still resonates in me as an adult. I relived these experiences as I listened to the previously mentioned students in my office. There were many agonizing moments in my childhood as I pondered the question "What's wrong with me?" It was a shock to realize that I would not be accepted if I was just me.

I dropped out of high school after my junior year. This was the norm in my immediate and extended family. There was no expectation of graduating from high school. The expectation was to find a decent job and support yourself. If there were health benefits and a retirement plan, then, at least in my family, you had succeeded in life. I fulfilled that expectation. I started working for a large grocery chain and maintained that job for 13 years. In 1996, my 10th year at that job, I realized I wanted more from life. I had always embraced science as a child and decided to pursue that

dream. Yet, I had no formal education, just a GED I obtained after I dropped out of high school in 1983.

On September 6, 1996, while stocking the frozen food shelves at the grocery store, I stopped what I was doing. I stood up realizing I was not where I was meant to be any longer. I found myself determined to change my situation, and in spring of 1997, I enrolled in two courses at San Jose City College. It was there, at the age of 30, in my first science class, where I decided to become a biologist. In 1998, I was able to leave my job at the grocery store, one month short of my 13th anniversary, and focus on being a college student, the first in my family to do so! The college environment was not an easy adjustment. Although I was openly Gay, I had a fear of being open on campus. During the lab internship described earlier, I had even more trepidation about being openly Gay. My trepidation was further exacerbated by the obvious heteronormative climate both at junior college and my eventual transfer to a university.

After two years, I graduated with an associate's degree in Biology and transferred to the University of Alaska Fairbanks where I completed a bachelor's degree in Biological Science. Afterwards, at San Francisco State University, I completed a second bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and Social Justice. I completed a master's degree in Education and soon obtained an adjunct position at a junior college and teaching Biology. This was a dream come true. The economic downturn, which began in 2008, caused severe budget cuts and I was laid off in 2012. Luckily, I had obtained a position as an academic advisor in 2008 and kept both jobs until my lay-off. Witnessing the experiences of some of my advisees and my concurrent enrollment as a doctoral

student allowed me to examine critically the challenges of Latino men and specifically Gay Latino men like myself in higher education.

I have the privilege to know many openly Gay Latin@s on my campus. I am also distraught to know that many other Gay Latino males struggle to confront some of the same heteronormative expectations I have survived. My concern is the knowledge that campus climates and attitudes continue to exist with the same expectations, especially when it comes to the representations of racism, heterosexism, and homophobia throughout the campus community.

In my practice, when Latinos share that they sometimes feel out of place or alienated, I cannot help but feel a personal connection. As a higher education professional, I hope to see increased retention of Latino males, particularly those who identify as Gay.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were operationalized for this study.

Campus climate- The current perceptions and attitudes of faculty, staff, and students regarding issues of diversity on a campus (Rankin, 2005, p. 17).

Critical race theory (CRT) - The critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power. (Delgado & Stephanic, 2012).

First-generation student-Students whose parents do not have a four-year college degree (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012).

Heteronormative- Heteronormative means that masculine men routinely pair with feminine women (Arend, 2014).

Latin@s- Term used to refer to people with cultural ties to Latin America and people of nationalities within the bounds of Latin America.

Latino critical theory (LatCrit)-Addresses issues decentered by critical race theorists such as class, language, gender and sexuality, immigration status, ethnicity, and culture (Espinoza et. al, 1990).

Queer critical theory (QueerCrit)-A critical examination of both race and sexual orientation in society through the perspectives of Gay and Lesbian scholarship (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001)

Testimonio (Testimony)-Latin American cultural genre maintained by a long history of oral storytelling as way to share experiences of exploitation (Bernal, Burciaga & Carmona, 2012).

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with deeper meaning.
Maya Angelou

Introduction

The present study is uniquely situated within the field of higher education. This is the focus of this literature review. First, Latinos males in higher education is examined. Second, racism in higher education is discussed with an emphasis on campus environment. Third, the institutional role of student affairs is reviewed. Fourth, the nature of campus support is also appraised. These areas of higher education assist in maintaining a discursive connection with the theoretical framework outlined in chapter one. Moreover, these areas intersect and interact not only with the theoretical framework but with one another.

Latino Males in Higher Education

The Latino male presence in both primary, secondary, and postsecondary settings is decreasing and impacting college retention rates (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Institutional and cultural factors were relevant to this literature review in order validate the growing research on the Latino K-12 pipeline. Latino males, many of whom are first-generation college students, encounter cultural and gender norms which serve as obstacles while attempting to access and succeed in higher education.

Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) examined the decreasing presence of Latino males in K-12 and higher education by focusing on the educational pipeline for Latino males, cultural and gender norms in the Latin@ community, and “factors that can facilitate

college access and graduation for Latino males" (p. 55). The purpose of Saenz and Ponjuan's study was to investigate why college age Latino males, in comparison to college age Latinas, are "vanishing" (p. 63). One finding was that both Latino males and African American males, mainly from urban settings, academic achievement as a form of resistance to dominant white culture. This resistance coupled with peer and cultural pressures such as family traditions of the male working as opposed to going to college have played a significant role in Latino male retention in the educational pipeline.

Many Latino students who enter selective public research universities encounter racial/ ethnic and socioeconomic diversity that diverges widely from the racial/ethnic composition of their communities of origin, including their high schools and neighborhoods (Gandara & Contreras, 2009). Additionally, structural pressures such as disparities in funding for segregated minority groups in urban school settings and even immigrant status are key characteristics (Orfield & Gordon, 2001). One characteristic of the educational pipeline for Latinos in higher education is their status as a first-generation college student. Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) identified low enrollment throughout the pipeline as well as cultural and social barriers facing Latino males which are connected to their first-generation status while attempting to access higher education.

First-Generation College Students

Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Teenzini, (2004) discussed first-generation college students and how systems of support impact these students. The researchers emphasized the first-generation college experience and the identified educational benefits of a supportive space in higher education. Pascarella (2006) also suggested academic and out-of-class experiences of during college differ along ethnic and racial dimensions.

In a longitudinal study of first-generation college students, Pascarella et al. (2004), examined the factors influencing students' learning and cognitive development during college. The study began in 1992 and concluded in 1995. Sampling was two-fold, institutional and student. The institutional sample was comprised of 18 four-year universities. The student sample was comprised of s randomly selected first year students involved with the National Study of Student Learning (NSSL). Confidentiality was maintained and informed consent was provided to each participant.

Data collection was accomplished via survey and consisted of four phases: 1) initial, 2) first, 3) second, 4) and third follow up spanning the time frame of the study. The initial data consisted of pre-college information such as "Academic College Testing Program (ACT) scores, demographic information as well as aspirations, expectations of college, and orientations toward learning" (p. 253). This initial data was gathered from 2,416 participating students. First, second and third follow-up data collection instruments included Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP), developed by ACT, College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), and NSSL surveys.

Dependent variables consisted of four standardized measures of students' learning or cognitive development, four psychological assessments regarding orientation to learning and diversity (assumed attitude) and one educational plan. The researchers stated, "Limitations of the study included the inability to generalize the results of first-generation college students across the United States based on 18 participating institutes across 15 states" (p. 263). Another limitation was that of a dropout rate of students in the study. Also, a final limitation was that of race/ethnicity. The researchers found it difficult to interpret conditions in the educational setting based on ethnicity. When compared to

students whose parents were college graduates, participants were found to have lower levels of degree planning. Additionally, participants were found to have lower grades through the third year of college compared to peers who had parents who graduated from college.

The study also found significant importance in the level of engagement in academic or classroom activities. First-generation students tend to derive significantly greater educational benefits from engagement in academic or classroom activities, e.g. time spent studying, hours studied, number of term papers or written reports completed, and time spent reading. First-generation college students need supportive spaces. These spaces become dynamic learning environments in which active students can come and work on academic projects, spend time with peers - all of which aids in their retention. Of notable importance to first-generation students was "their level of engagement with their institution's social and peer network" (p. 278).

Furthermore, Pascarella et al. (2006) suggest there is intriguing evidence that the academic and out-of-of class experiences that influence intellectual and persona development during college differ along such dimensions as race/ethnicity and first-generation status (Pascarella et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996). The researchers claim that we should expect generally unstudied student groups such as "Native Americans, students with disabilities, and lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender students to have their own distinctive models of development and change during college" (Pascarella, 2006, p. 514).

Coping Mechanisms for Latino Students

Gloria, Castellanos, Scull, and Villegas (2009) examined psychological coping strategies used by Latino undergraduates. The researchers identified a "lack of empirical literature regarding Latinos' experience in higher education to the extent that practitioners are limited in understanding Latinos in the context of Latinas and other REM (racial ethnic minorities)" (p. 318).

Data collection for the study took place during a 24 month period at a large university where the Latino/a population was 11.5%. The study focused on students enrolled in Chicano/Latino courses as well as Chicano/Latino student organizations. Participants were asked to complete a survey which yielded a 62% response. Latino undergraduates (N=100) were all of Mexican/Latino descent. Six instrumental scales were implemented in order to capture perceptions of Self-Esteem; Barriers; University Environment; Cultural Congruity; Psychological Well Being; and one Coping Responses Instrument.

The researchers identified generalizability as a limitation of the study due to reliance on self-reporting. The sampling was non-random. Since representation was high among the population sample, conclusions could not be drawn as to Latino counterparts in similar settings but without the high percentage presence of Latinos. The researchers sought to identify reported coping responses (CR) and discovered "Of the identified CR's, did class standing have an impact? And to what degree did the study variables predict well-being for male Latino undergraduates" (p. 334).

The researchers found that Latinos, although they identified some coping mechanisms, did include seeking professional advice (Gloria et al., 2009). This was

consistent with a previous study conducted by Vazquez and Garcia-Vazquez (1995) which identified an "underuse of counseling due to cultural norms" (p. 331). Additionally, the study affirmed cultural congruity regarding the university environment played a significant role.

Another identified finding was that the cultural and social norm for Latinos to mask emotion was itself a source of distress (Gloria et al. 2009). For example, "bringing Latino males together to socialize, share common stories or experiences, and explicitly address societal stereotypes and expectations about who they are as Latino males" (p. 352).

Cultural congruity and racial/ethnic and socioeconomics that differ vary between universities and communities of origin (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Vazquez & Garcia-Vazquez, 1995). In a quantitative study, Ojeda, Navarro, and Morales (2011) analyzed how *familismo* plays a role in the higher education path of Mexican American college men. The results revealed for the186 Mexican American participants, parental encouragement was an important factor in their persistence. What is emphasized throughout the studies is the implementation and use of culture along the educational pathway.

Research on the status of Latino male students raises the issue of institutional agency. Academic support is a common practice in colleges; however, support systems that promote inclusion and acceptance for Queer Students of Color are limited. Moreover, Latino males, many whom are first-generation students, face significant cultural and gender norms are challenging for them to navigate (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Accessing support in college was identified as a key to success by

Pascarella et al. (2004). However, what is absent are the types of assistance or support the students receive and how to better understand the benefits of concentrated academic support. The results of the study suggest that engagement in and out of the classroom is paramount. The present study sought to examine what this support looks like for Gay Latino Males.

The research of Gloria et al. (2009) examined coping mechanisms described by Latino males in college. Of importance to this research was the finding that the least used coping mechanism for Latino males in the study was that of seeking professional advice. The researchers concluded Latino males need for an emotional in order to cope with educational stress. This is a critical issue regarding the present research in that it seeks to explore experiences of support. If professional advising is not sought then other types of support are being explored. Contreras (2009) reports that for Latino students specifically, perceptions of prejudice and discrimination on campus negatively affect educational aspirations and increase withdrawal behavior, ultimately harming degree attainment (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993; Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2006; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). The researchers also found psychological coping which did not include seeking advice or counseling was also a finding of Vasquez and Garcia-Vazquez (1995).

Structural interventions are necessary because they provide needed services to Latinos in higher education. In addition to structural interventions is the use of re-defined ways of looking at what it means to be successful in education for Latinos. For example, validation of family support and use of culture in conjunction with academic interventions that do not decenter Latin@ issues in higher education (Ojeda, Navarro, & Morales, 2011; Castellanos and Gloria, 2007). Again, it was the redefined ways and the

structural interventions, or lack of, which this study explores. When we compare the previous areas of research to LGBTQ Students of Color and campus climate, there is a demonstrated need for institutional support.

Racism in Higher Education

Hemphill (2001) discussed racism in higher education. He stated there are two reasons why "the dominant group based knowledge is universal knowledge and problematic in adult higher education" (p. 15). In other words, for the field of education to be an agent of equity and social justice, a metanarrative of the way in which students learn is counterproductive. Hemphill noted:

> There are generalizations that operate hegemonically to marginalize learners and practitioners who do not conform to generalized learning or motivational patterns. They frustrate practitioners who often care about the needs of those who are culturally, socially, economically, and linguistically marginalized. (pp. 15-16)

Moreover, dominant discourse perpetuates the invisibility of minority perspectives and also leads to misunderstanding between teachers and students (Misawa, 2006). Hemphill and Misawa provide valuable insights that inform the present study. Beyond the K-12 system, the educational pipeline still consists of the challenges of racism, homophobia and heteronormativity. Thusly, these issues and challenges are widely systemic and universal considering how society informs the education system.

Johnson-Baily (2002) theorized the field of adult education has valued the universal knowledge of racism. According to Johnson-Baily, there needs to be more perspectives from adult learners. Since the perspectives of people of color have been largely absent from the adult education literature, people of color need to be viewed human beings who represent differing backgrounds and perspectives in the field of adult education. Diversity is important in the educational field and in U.S. society because

dominant discourse and stereotypes are often framed by racist perspectives. Instead of reexamining dominant discourse to prevent racism, new perspectives that are based on people of color should be created because a dominant discourse perpetuates racism in society (Johnson-Bailey, 2002; Misawa, 2006).

What follows is the axiom that ethnicity/race, racism, and sexual orientation are relevant factors when exploring the marginalizing conditions in higher education. It is these experiences of Gay Latino men at those intersections which drive this literature review and study. In order to focus on the inclusion of race/ethnicity and sexuality, the following areas of the literature reviewed highlights how inclusion on college campuses for LGBTQ Students of Color can be accomplished.

Campus Climate for LGBTQ Students

Campus climate is integral in understanding factors such as attitudes and working toward building a college experience that contributes to growth and understanding of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) relationships. Both an understanding and critique of the literature regarding LGBTQ issues on college campuses provides insight into the way practitioners can be better informed. The inclusion of sexual orientation and race/ethnicity as intersecting factors for students can aid in the development and redevelopment of programs that facilitate positive development of heteronormative attitudes towards LGBTQ relationships (Liang & Alimo (2005).

In a longitudinal study, Jayakumar (2009) collected data from 14,975 students. Included in the sample were 384 four-year institutions. The purpose was to address “To what extent do student views toward LGB (Lesbian Gay Bisexual) relationships change during college and what college experiences, if any, facilitate such change?” (p. 681)

Using a pretest prior to entering college, attitudes of LGB relationships data was captured as well as other demographic data. Participants were given a post-test (2000) to measure for shifting attitude changes regarding sexual prejudices.

Table 1
Change in Sexual Prejudice from 1996 to 2000 (*N* = 13,881)

Response	Percentage in 1996	Percentage in 2000	
Sexually prejudiced	12%	8%	–4%
Somewhat sexually prejudiced	15%	12%	–3%
Somewhat accepting	30%	25%	–5%
Accepting	43%	56%	+13%

Note. Sexually prejudiced = "agree strongly" with the statement, "There should be laws prohibiting homo- sexual relationships;" somewhat sexually prejudiced = "agree somewhat;" somewhat accepting = "disagree somewhat;" accepting = "disagree strongly."

Table 1 indicates the changes in attitude regarding sexual prejudices with a significant change in "accepting", a 13 percent increase. Another reported trend of the study was that of students who switched from "sexually prejudiced" to "accepting" from 1996-2000. All respondents reported increased acceptance: White (n=8,975) 20%; Black (n=458) 17%; American Indian (n=132) 15%; Asian (n=652) 17%; and Latino/a (n=218) 20% increases respectively (Jayakumar, 2009). The researcher shared, "An important finding that emerged from this study was that curricular and experiential components of racial diversity can facilitate a decrease in sexual prejudice on college campuses" (p. 690).

The research supports the need to address sexual prejudice and heterosexist attitudes on college campuses. Jayakumar asserts that her study informs colleges about attitudes regarding LGBTQ students and that research disbars the rationale that it is primarily the student culture that creates an oppressive atmosphere for LGB students; it

seems that there is something beyond student attitudes that maintains a confining environment where LGB students continue to feel a disconnect to the rest of the university (Jayakumar, 2009; Love, 1998; Rankin, 2003; Rhoads, 1995a).

Campus Climate for LGBTQ Students of Color

Renn (2010) discussed the growing inclusion of LGBTQ students within the literature. However, Renn also noted research on LGBTQ and other marginalized students is still limited. Renn's statement lends support to the present research in that LGBTQ Students of Color remain a marginalized group on college campuses. Moreover, experiencing oppressive college environments often leads to alienation and isolation for many LGBTQ Students of Color. The issue of LGBTQ identities as they intersect with race adds another layer of complexity to identity. What this relationship means in the context of a campus environment is that due to these intersecting identities "Student Affairs professionals should consider students' meaning-making capacity in relation to campus culture and other contextual influences" (Abes, et al., 2007, p. 20). One facet of the contextualized campus culture is the attitude of heterosexual students and how they regard LGBTQ students.

In a longitudinal study by Liang and Alimo (2005), attitudes of White heterosexual undergraduates towards Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) people at a large public mid-Atlantic university were examined. The researchers utilized contact hypothesis, which states regular contact with members from different groups is a necessary, though not entirely sufficient, means for reducing negative attitudes and challenge stereotypes of stigmatized groups (Liang & Alimo, 2005). The researchers cite

several studies that correlate heterosexual attitudes toward Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual individuals (e.g. D'Augelli & Rose, 1990; Marsiglio, 1993).

Participants were selected from a group of incoming first year college students at a large university. The participants completed a survey from a larger study assessing diversity-related outcomes during summer orientation and subsequently completed a follow-up survey two years later. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with a range of diversity-related items on a four-point Likert-scale. The researchers received 2,807 responses. Demographics of the sample were: 13% Asian American, 10% African American, 5% Latin@, .2% Indigenous, 68% White, .4% Foreign, and 4% unknown. Respondents were contacted again and given an online survey link used for a larger study. The researchers purpose was to identify heterosexual participants (n=401) and who identified as White.

Dependent variables of the study included themes such as attitudes toward Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual (LGB) relationships. Other variables were gender, general attitudes regarding LGB relationships prior to college, amount of interaction the participant reported having with LGB individuals prior to college and the amount of contact with LGB individuals while in college. A multivariate analysis was tested through the use of a path model.

Liang and Alimo (2005) identified limitations of the study, including survey was an incomplete indicator of sexual preference identity; respondents may have been biased in attitude toward diversity in general; respondents were only individuals who attended freshmen orientation. Therefore, excluded students were late admits from lower socioeconomic background who may have been first-generation students. Another

limitation was that the study only observed one component of campus climate (heterosexual attitudes) toward LGB relationships. The fact that correlational field design does not allow for causal interpretation was also a limitation. Finally, attitudes concerning transgendered individuals was not part of the study.

The results of the study indicated shifting attitudes for both men and women from the first and second administration of the survey. Also, women held significantly more positive attitudes toward LGB relationships than men. Thus, gender was included in subsequent analyses. Significant relationships were observed between gender and other variables as well as women who were more likely to report significantly more positive attitudes toward LGB individuals than their male counterparts. Finally, contact with LGB individuals prior to college served as a strong predictor for contact with LGB individuals while in college.

Liang and Alimo (2005) suggested the results of the study can inform campus administrators about campus environments. Moreover, they recommended that institutions looking to create a positive environment where heterosexual and LGB students can fully develop are encouraged to cultivate or enhance opportunities for structured intergroup contact where students have a mutual goal and can develop meaningful relationships. Finally, the researchers proposed that "by gaining an understanding of factors such as attitudes and working toward building college experience that contribute to growth and understanding of LGB relationships, practitioners can develop programs that facilitate development of heterosexual attitudes towards LGB relationships" (p. 248). Unlike the Liang and Alimo study, the following

study examines perceptions of how LGBTQ Students of Color experience violence on college campuses.

Campus Incidents for LGBTQ Students of Color

Rankin and Reason (2005) surveyed students from 10 campuses (n=7,347). The purpose was to capture how different racial groups reported and/or experienced their campus climate. For the purpose of this review, only the Students of Color and identified sexual orientation will be discussed. The researchers collected data from focus groups, individual interviews, and document analyses. Of varying geographic locations in the US, the participating institutions included 2 private and 8 public colleges and universities. The researchers analyzed over 15,000 returned surveys following purposeful and snowball sampling. The researchers found that in terms of race, 33% Students of Color reported experiencing harassment (see table 3). 60 percent of Transgender students reported experiencing harassment (see Table 3). Table 4 highlights disaggregated findings.

Table 3.

Personal Experiences of Harassment by Race and Gender

	Yes %	**(*n*)**	**No %**	**(*n*)**	$\chi^2_{(1)}$
Female					
Students of	33.7	(455)	66.3	(897)	41.29*
White Students	24.6	(890)	75.4	(2,734)	
Male					
Students of	29.7	(193)	70.3	(457)	52.38*
White Students	16.2	(262)	83.8	(1,353)	
Transgender					
Students of	50.0	(2)	50.0	(2)	0.227
White Students	63.6	(7)	26.7	(4)	

* $p < .001$.

Table 4.

Focus of Experienced Harassment

	Students of Color (n = 653)		White Students (n = 1,163)	
	%	*n*	%	*n*
Gender	45.8	299	62.6	728
Race	65.4	427	6.9	80
Religious Beliefs	13.6	89	17.7	206
Sexual Orientation	8.1	53	11.0	128
Age	16.7	109	17.7	206
Disability	2.1	14	5.2	60
Ethnicity	37.7	246	4.2	49

The researchers indicated White privilege was one of the significant implications from this large study. Rankin and Reason also suggested that White students on these campuses "who do not experience campus climates as racist or hostile may conclude that such interventions are unwarranted, unnecessary" (p. 59). The researchers also emphasized the importance of addressing this issue within higher education. For the present study, racism and heteronormativity were vital to examine. The multidimensional identities discussed in the findings and analysis were revealed as key components. If programming for LGBTQ students purport to be inclusive, then a paradox exists for the participants in this study.

Gay Men of Color and Racist Attitudes

In a qualitative study, Stevens (2004) explored critical incidences in the college environment to explore gay undergraduate students' identities and how these incidents interact with other dimensions of these men's identities. The sample consisted of 11 self-identified Gay male college students. Using grounded theory, Stevens' exploration of

Gay identity development within a college environment allows the exploration of the topic as it evolves throughout the research as opposed to testing a priori hypotheses based on previous research (Brown, Stevens, Toiano, & Schneider, 2002). Participants attended a large university near a major metropolitan area where the campus undergraduate population consisted of significant White, African American, Asian American, and Hispanic American populations.

The campus maintained support programs for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered students. Stevens states that all participants self-identified as Gay and had attended the university for at least two semesters at the time of the interviews. Citing Lincoln and Guba, the researchers found the additional information an important criterion for trustworthiness. Participant ages ranged from 18-26. Seven of the men identified as White or Caucasian; one identified as White and Latino; one as Black; one as Filipino American; and one as Latino. At the time of the research, three men lived in the residence halls and eight identified as commuter students. Eight of the participants had identified themselves as Gay prior to attending the university.

Identified limitations of the study included a small sample size, university size and location (Atlanta area), and the use of one university setting. Additionally, Stevens (2004) acknowledges the inability to generalize to broader populations of the LGBTQ community. Socioeconomic status and disability status were also not major incorporated aspects of the study

Stevens conducted three rounds of interviews of approximately 75 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Broad open-ended questions were used for the initial interview. The second interview built on the developed categories

stemming from the coding of the first interview. The third interview consisted of finalizing details of the developing categories and emerging theory and confidentiality was maintained throughout the procedure. Stevens also included an optional final focus group.

Data was analyzed in a simultaneous procedure with data collection (Stevens, 2004). This constant comparative analysis is the primary form of data interpretation and coding in grounded theory (Flaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin as cited in Stevens, 2004). Use of Strauss and Corbin's method of open, axial, and selective coding allowed the researcher to convey meaning to words, thoughts, and phrases from the raw data; identify conditions, actions/interactions and consequences associated with a category; and to select a central category from existing categories to account for variation within categories (Stevens, 2004).

Stevens identified a conceptual model of gay identity in his study which consists of a central category (empowerment) followed by five integrative categories (self-acceptance; disclosure to others; individual factors; environmental influences; and multiple identities exploration). Regarding men of color, Stevens found;

> Students of Color also felt rejection within the gay community. Racism attached to the stereotype of the "ideal" gay man did not often fit the description of any men of color the exception occurred with White men who found certain men, often Asian and Latino as exotic. (p. 195)

Stevens' findings exemplifies how for men of color racist attitudes complicated their developmental process because they often had to "maneuver through homophobic tendencies in racial communities and racial prejudice in gay communities including the university environment that these men experienced" (p. 202).

The intersectionality of racism, oppression, and heteronormativity are sustained on college campuses. The above researchers and authors provide theoretical and empirical data on this issue. Hemphill (2001) and Johnson-Bailey (2002) emphasize racism in the field of education which stems from dominant group discourse. Empirical data by Liang and Alimo (2005) provides information regarding attitudes of white students toward LGBTQ students at a major university. Findings were found to be informative for campus administrators regarding improvement of campus climate. Rankin and Reason (2005) identified incidents of harassment for Students of Color due to sexual orientation. Stevens (2004) also identified incidences on a college campus which affected gay men of color on. The following section further outlines the previously mentioned intersections with a focus on institutional involvement and LGBTQ Students of Color.

Student Affairs and LGBTQ Students

Higher education administration agency regarding Queer students began as a long history of oppression (Dilley 2002). In the early 20th century, this agency was rooted in dealing with students by gender. The emergence of the professional field of student affairs in the mid-1900s brought together two approaches that ultimately led to a new way of thinking about homosexual college students (Renn, 2010). Male and female college students were administered by a separate dean. As a result, some student affairs departments participated in the removal of homosexual students because they did not conform to strict gender disciplinary codes of the time. In other instances, homosexual students were identified as diseased as exampled by the following practice: “Believing that homosexuality was a *treatable disease*, not an untreatable personality disorder, well-meaning student affairs professionals might be convinced by campus medical staff to

keep a student on campus and enlist him or her in psychological treatment" (Dilley, 2002a, p. 426).

As the above quote indicates, the moral agency administered to Queer students was based on a medical and social ideology administered within higher education. The legacy of an oppressive moral agency for homosexual students still exists today. Not only are homophobic attitudes prevalent, so are harassment, racism and heteronormative practices (Hemphill, 2002; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Stevens, 2004). Dilley (2002) stated, "The fundamental doctrines of collegiate education were subject to the social, moral, legal, and/or medical doctrines and agenda of the day; as those mores changed within the larger society, campus climates for non-heterosexual students evolved and so did responses to them" (p. 426).

Shifting Student Affairs Attitudes

The social, medical, and educational shifts regarding homosexuality allowed for a more progressive attitude for the LGBTQ community. On college campuses Queer students became more active. As a result, "Student Affairs professionals—charged with attending to the holistic development of all students—took notice, just as they had and were taking notice of increasing numbers of women and Students of Color (primarily African American, then also Asian American and Latino/a)" (Renn, 2010, p. 133). These shifts also focus the discourse to one of identity.

According to Thelin (2004), "The college student population in the United States has undergone a substantial diversification, from majority male to majority female, to include a higher proportion and diversity of Students of Color, and to include visible populations

of adult students, immigrants, students with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students" (p. 579).

A report by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute suggested, "In response to the heightened awareness of anti- LGBT acts of intolerance and to issues of LGBT inequality prevalent on college campuses, top administrators at several universities appointed task forces or ad hoc committees to investigate the institutional climate for LGBT individuals" (Rankin, 2003, p. 9). Conversely, according to Jayakumar (2009), "At the structural level, in terms of statewide policies affecting educational institutions, only 13 states and the District of Columbia have a law, regulation, or policy in place that protects individuals from harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation in schools" (p. 677). The intervention of student affairs professionals for LGBTQ students in higher education is significantly different from its beginnings in the early 20th century. Student affairs professionals have much more agency with regards to the LGBTQ community on campus. Yet, as Jayakumar points out, when there is a focus on the discourse to LGBTQ Students of Color, this agency lags behind the heteronormative agenda and an expanded dialogue is required.

Student affairs in higher education developed during a time when morality and sexual behavior was still administered in colleges and universities. Early on, student affairs professionals practiced severely oppressive ways of dealing with homosexual students, to the extent of expulsion (Dilley, 2002a; 2002b). As populations diversified, the onus was on institutions of higher education to shift from a moral enforcement agency to one of development and support. This was a needed change due to increased population and visibility of LGBTQ students. Students of Color also increased on college

campuses and student affairs professionals took notice (Renn, 2010). Throughout all the increased diversity and policy changes, campus colleges still struggled to meet the needs of marginalized students.

Summary

LGBTQ Students of Color are still struggling for an equitable voice in higher education and increased visibility by administrators. It is important to note only one quarter of states in the US provide legal protection in schools regarding harassment based on sexual orientation (Jayakumar, 2009). Again, what is needed among scholarship regarding LGBTQ Students of Color is a more detailed account of experiences by these students. For example, a compilation of personal narratives of Lesbian sorority members provides insight for student affairs professionals and a sense of visibility for members of this group (Windmeyer & Freeman, 2001). Similar insight is at the heart of the present study.

Literature on the higher education setting for LGBTQ students, and particularly LGBTQ Students of Color has been explored thus far. Starting with the central population of Latin@s in education to Latino men and their positionality in higher education. Then an examination of reported campus climates amongst different higher educational campuses was delineated. This was followed by discussion regarding the role of Student Affairs in higher education was then discussed as it progressed throughout the 20th century along with increased presence of LGBTQ students. The following final section will look to reported findings of support structures on college campuses in order to further situate the current study.

Campus Support Systems

Campus support structures for LGBTQ students are a vital aspect of the academic experience. According to Rankin (2006), the research on the needs of LGBTQ people suggests that interventions fall into three categories: institutional support and commitment when it comes to recruitment and retention of LGBTQ students, including social outlets, housing, and safety. As LGBTQ rights have increased, the development of Queer friendly organizations on college campuses have become more visible.

However, this increased visibility is still secondary to heterosexual ones (Miceli, 2005). Institutions of higher learning have also increased their commitment to become more inclusive. Yost (2011) noted, "This support is demonstrated through inclusive mission statements, open recruitment of diverse students and faculty, the formalization of academic departments dedicated to underrepresented people and minorities, and student groups that represent and ally with LGBTQ people" (p. 1331). This section emphasizes focus on the system of support structures identified for LGBTQ students. However, it is evident that the intersection between campus climate and support structures cannot be ignored. Therefore, the latter will be the focus of the discussion in the following section with implications from the former.

Yost (2011) supports the work of Renn (2010) and Rankin (2006). Yost asserted there is increasing LGBTQ presence and rhetoric. However, Rankin also claimed, "Although colleges and universities are the source of much queer theory, they have remained substantially untouched by the queer agenda" (p. 132). The Queer agenda Renn refers to is not the expansion, although much needed, of LGBTQ support structures, instead it is the normalizing of presence of LGBTQ students on campus. For example,

many campuses establish their spaces of support for LGBTQ students internally, including counseling and psychological services or student health centers. Renn continued, "The agenda, if there can be said to be one, of this work was to demonstrate that lesbians and gay men were normal, just like everyone else…" (p. 134). One way to move away from heteronormative campus spaces and establish and maintain support structures for LGBTQ students is to examine campus climate.

Support for LGBTQ Students of Color

According to Rankin (2003), a report on national campus climate on LGBTQ students revealed only 14 of 4,000 4-year colleges in the US had support structures. Undoubtedly, there is a need to address the paucity in campus support for LGBTQ students. What is important to note is that the above discussions do not include the intersection of Queer Students of Color and campus support structures in higher education. Rankin (2006) also asserted, "Our understanding of campus climates must, therefore, incorporate differences based on social identity group memberships" (p. 112).

One of the most important student services a college or university can provide is accessible, visible, support for its students. Academic Affairs departments and Student Affairs have each supported increased awareness and sensitivity in and out of the classroom regarding LGBTQ students and Students of Color. What is not clearly visible and/or accessible is support for students who identify as LGBTQ and of color:

> Structural interventions are necessary because they provide needed services to LGBTQ people, demonstrate institutional support, and shift basic assumptions and premises….There is a need for systematic, sustained, and empirical-based research to evaluate the outcomes of these strategic initiatives and their effectiveness in improving the institutional climate for LGBTQ people. (p. 115)

Perceptions of supportive environments reinforce positive learning and social outcomes for students, especially with respect to issues of racial understanding (Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Whitt et al. 2001). Moreover, acknowledging the challenge Queer Students of Color face when it comes to racism and heterosexism and the lack of a support structures for this specific population is addressed by few researchers and authors; Kumashiro (2001) referred to this issue as a paradox. Kumashiro also declared, "If educators are to address queer Students of Color and challenge both racism and heterosexism in schools they must work through these paradoxes" (p. 2).

Miceli (2005) proclaimed increased visibility of institutional interventions for LGBTQ students is not as prevalent as heterosexual ones. Through inclusive mission statements and academic availability of LGBTQ history and culture, higher education has been on a path toward formalizing dedication to underrepresented students in the form of allies. Yet, a mainstream, accessible and visible support network for LGBTQ students are limited. The relationship between campus climate and institutional support remains static for LGBTQ students and Students of Color, and as the above researchers found, the intersection of the these two populations remains largely unexplored (Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Kumashiro, 2001; Rankin, 2003).

Summary of the Literature Review

Within education there are many marginalized groups. Specifically, in higher education, individuals are expected to maintain and cultivate aspects of their identity which makes them feel whole, balanced, accepted, and respected as adults in higher education. Unfortunately, many colleges and universities maintain environments which are not conducive to learning and personal well-being; for LGBTQ students in general,

but especially for LGBTQ Students of Color. The empirical studies and research articles examined in this literature review situate the current study within the field of education and informs my methodology. The literature reviewed supports the problem statement in chapter one: Oppression in higher education; lack of scholarship surrounding racism, homophobia, and support structures (or lack of) for Gay Latino males which are indeed devoid of personal accounts.

The theoretical framework of CRT, including its two extensions LatCrit and QueerCrit, formed the philosophical underpinnings of the reviewed literature. For example, LatCrit acknowledges the need to incorporate the experiential knowledge of Latinos to recognize them as individuals with unique experiences and identities. Given the marginalization and harassment of LGBTQ Students of Color highlighted by some of the reviewed research, QueerCrit repositions these students as capable of, with the necessary support, interrogating their lived experiences in order to intervene in the course of their lives. Therefore, in and out of the classroom support for LGBTQ Students of Color and an understanding of how Latino males cope in higher education can be recognized and more fully developed (Gloria et al., 2009; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

Campus climates, perceptions of prejudice, and discrimination on college campuses experienced by Latino students result in negative aspirations and decreased retention (Contreras, 2009; Cabrera et al., 1993; Nora et al., 2006; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Racism, heteronormative attitudes and behaviors on college campuses leads to oppressive spaces and in some cases harassment (Rankin & Reason 2005; Stevens, 2004). When it comes to LGBTQ Students of Color, the marginalization and feelings of isolation-alienation are exacerbated. QueerCrit addresses the need for theory and practice

to move beyond the boundaries of the Gay/Lesbian identity binary to widen the scope of associated scholarship. Thus, as the present study affirms, the inclusion of race, and queerness in higher education requires further critical examination within campus communities.

Traditional paradigms for dealing with Queer students do not meet their needs. Additionally, current interventions for the campus community are not as visible as heterosexual ones, especially for LGBTQ Students of Color (Miceli, 2005). Institutional interventions in the form of support programs for LGBTQ Students of Color remain lower than those for heterosexual students, resulting in continued racism and a heteronormative climate on college campuses (Rankin, 2003, 2006). A remaining gap exists within empirical scholarship regarding support structures for LGBTQ Students of Color. Researchers in this literature review have identified this gap and recommend further research (Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Kumashiro, 2001; Rankin, 2003).

Student affairs officials are now charged with not dis-enrolling Queer students or treating them as deficient but providing safe spaces and acknowledgement of their presence. Kumashiro (2001) asserted that Queer theory leaves race largely untouched. What is needed is further research on the intersections of QueerCrit and race regarding Queer Students of Color. For, as demonstrated in this literature review, these students represent the intersections of LatCrit and QueerCrit and by extension how these theoretical frameworks intersect with their experiences on college campuses.

Institutions of higher education must address not only campus climate but also ensure that a more democratic and inclusive campus climate is also in manifested in the construction and maintenance of support structures. Student affairs in higher education

has evolved from its punitive methods early in the 20th century regarding homosexual students to addressing the increased visibility of LGBTQ students. However, the progress has been slow. Student affairs on college campuses continue to embody a disproportionate system of heteronormative support and to lack of support interventions regarding LGBTQ Students of Color (Jayakumar, 2009; Rankin, 2003; Renn, 2010; Thelin, 2004).

Finally, this literature review informs the methodology for this study. Future narratives, and/or *testimonios* from the present study may help inform educational administrators, faculty or staff about how to create inclusive, safe environments for LGBTQ students regardless of ethnicity. A college campus should not be a space where any student feels isolated or alienated or experiences harassment in any form. Perhaps as a result of future research in this area, hate crimes, violent episodes, or other types of acrimony will greatly diminish on college campuses and in society.

Chapter III

Methodology

Restatement of Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study is two-fold. First, to document *testimonios* of Gay Latino men in a higher education setting and to use a theoretical framework from which to analyze their experiences of support or lack of support at a California State University campus. Second, to address the paucity of scholarly literature which links racism, homophobia, and heterosexism with academic and/or social support for Gay Latino males in higher education.

The research explores the ways in which the campus climate, organizations, classroom instruction, and counseling either offer support or hinder participation and academic success. Discourse surrounding racism, homophobia, and lack of support structures for Gay Latino males within higher education is devoid of personal accounts and often generalized (Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005; Jagose, 1996). This study seeks to examine perspectives of Gay Latino males of support structures, or lack thereof, at a California State University. It was my supposition that these support systems can either be self-established, institutional, or found within the communities outside of the campus setting. *Testimonios* of Gay Latino men in higher education can be used as an alternate lens from which to analyze issues of discrimination stemming from racism, heterosexism, and homophobia. This research allows administrators, faculty, and staff in higher education to examine how transformation regarding marginalization and oppression can be achieved.

Empowerment through *testimonios* provides a two-fold transformation. From the analyses of the *testimonios*, it is possible to identify deficiencies in academic-institutional, social, or familial support, which may lead to the development of ideas and solutions to improve the LGBTQ students' experiences. This study also identifies positive institutional academic, social, or familial support systems to serve as models for other institutions.

Research Design

A qualitative design was appropriate for this research due to the complexity of the human condition, and it allows for an emerging human experience to be captured (Creswell, 2008). I applied *testimonio* as the method of data collection. The rationale was to emphasize the importance of deeply exploring the in and out-of-class experiences of Gay Latino men. Moreover, factors that influenced their experiences differed along such dimensions as race/ethnicity and sexuality which is supported by the work of Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, and Flowers (2004). It was through the participants' personal stories that I was able to simultaneously reflect with them. Indeed, our shared and extraordinary similar experiences met the expectations of how I designed this study, something a quantitative design and direct question-answer procedure may not have accomplished.

The Personal Narrative

The personal narrative was key to my choice of research design and methodology. For educators looking for personal experiences in actual school settings, narrative research offers practical, specific insights (Creswell, 2008). With regard to determining the most accurate account of the narrative or *testimonio*, a biographical research design would not be appropriate. Moreover, there is a preponderance of "the

historical use of *testimonio* by Latin Americans reporting the stories of women using a feminist lens" (p. 515). Thus, narratives captured in this study enrich the body of *testimonio* research. Moreover, the theoretical frameworks of CRT, LatCrit, and QueerCrit, correspond with the methodology. In this way, the goal of capturing the experiences of marginalized individuals, Gay Latino males, was achieved.

Testimonio

Testimonio elicits awareness of oppression from a personal account. Reyes and Rodriquez (2012) assert that it is intentional and political. The authors also stress that there is no definitive moment in history where it began, but as a literary and research methodology, its roots extend back to the 1970s. Prior to early Spanish translations Latin American cultures maintained a long history of oral *testimonio* to share experiences of exploitation (Bernal, Burciaga & Carmona, 2012). Yudice (1985) defines *testimonio* as:

> An authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of the situation (war, revolution, oppression). Emphasizing popular oral discourse, the witness portrays his or her own experience as a representative of a collective memory and identity. Truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or exorcising and setting alright official history. (p. 4)

More salient to this study is that as a genre, *testimonio* serves to challenge dominant discourse such as heteronormativity and address the invisibility of the dispossessed, the migrant, and the Queer (Cruz, 2012). Therefore, the act of narrating, storytelling, or sharing *testimonios* upholds participant ownership of their own experiences, which are powerful and important enough to stand alone (Garcia, 2014). The participants in this study did, indeed, reveal a collective identity through their *testimonios* of experiencing racism, homophobia, and heteronormativity, both personally and from their higher education setting.

CRT and *Testimonio*

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) discuss how CRT can inform a methodology such as *testimonio* for research. They define critical race methodology as:

> A theoretically grounded approach to research that (a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects for the research process. However, it also challenges the separate discourses on race, gender, and class by showing how these three elements intersect to affect the experiences of student. (p. 24)

DeCuir and Dixson (2004) also maintain that counter storytelling is an essential tenet of CRT. The researchers point out that counterstories, regarding social injustices, provide a challenge to the dominant discourse, thereby giving voice to marginalized groups such as Queer Students of Color. Parker and Lyn (2002) discuss how CRT "has indeed advanced the use of narratives and storytelling to uncover, challenge, and expose the historical, ideological, psychological, and social contexts in which racism has been declared virtually eradicated…" (p. 10). Through *testimonio*, situated as a counterstory methodology for this study, the participants' experiential knowledge and voices are esteemed and shifted from the margins to the center (Garcia, 2014).

Hughes and Giles (2010) highlight a similar methodology as they discuss CRiT-Walking (based on critical race theory). The researchers state, "As CRiT walkers, we use historical data, personal accounts and observations and social criticism of the surrounding landscape as we navigate toward new perspectives on established social and educational phenomena" (p. 41). Hughes and Giles' statements regarding narrative research validate a methodology such as *testimonio.* Unlike the more common training of researchers to produce unbiased knowledge, *testimonio* challenges objectivity by situating the individual in communion with a collective experience marked by marginalization, oppression, or resistance. The research participants for this study, through their

experiential knowledge and personal accounts, provided a social critique of their landscape (Hughes & Giles, 2010), in this case, a university campus. Moreover, readers who examine this study can help others reach towards and possibly build solidarity as a means to resist dominant culture, laws, and policies that perpetuate inequity (Delgado-Bernal, Burciaga & Carmona, 2012).

The sharing of experiential knowledge regarding oppression, resistance, and the ways in which this sharing can prevent future oppression my hope. By shifting the voices of Gay Latino males in higher education from the margins, those experiences can be heard by others. In this way, a critical framework to analyze systemic inequity and injustice is fashioned (Espino et al., 2012).

New perspectives on established social and educational phenomena such as personal accounts are juxtaposed with the more common training of researchers to produce unbiased knowledge (Hughes & Giles, 2010). The data collected from the *testimonies* gives voice to these Gay Latino men. This was the expectation for my use of this methodology. Additionally, their *testimonies* will continue to serve as a venue to speak about educational inequities and systemic oppression (Delgado-Bernal et al., 2012). Having examined the rich history of *testimonio* work of my Latina colleagues and forbearers, I felt this was the correct way to proceed with this study. It seemed a sterile disconnect to follow a straightforward interview protocol calling from an objective mind. What I sought was connectedness and community with the participants. The below quote provided me with the validation and to a large extent, truth for this study.

> Through the abandonment of the assumption of objectivity in traditional ethnographic research, *testimonios* as a methodology provides an opportunity for the participant to speak from "a very particular race, class, gender, and sexual identity location. (Foley & Valenzuela, 2000, p. 218)

Testimonio as Research Methodology

As a methodology, *testimonio* can help educators and others be more aware of the needs of Gay Latino males in higher education. A bridge which connects queerness, experience, and theory, that paves a new way for socio-political transformation can then be constructed. According to Delgado-Bernal et al. (2012),

> *Testimonio* is and continues to be an approach that incorporates political, social, historical, and cultural histories that accompany one's life experience as a means to bring about change through consciousness-raising. In bridging individuals with collective histories of oppression, a story of marginalization is re-centered to elicit social change. (p. 364).

The social change Delgado-Bernal et al. refer to in the above quote can be marked by lived experiences in the form of *testimonios*.

This research has the unique opportunity to inform the field of education through the personal stories of the participants. Additionally, this research adds to the scarcity of scholarship that implements *testimonio* as a methodology that includes Gay Latino males. The methodological benefits of applying *testimonio* centers around honoring the participants' voices. Individually and to some extent, collectively, their voices are no longer silent. Although the participants are implementing a form of resistance on campus, their voices are now extended to the broader platform of academia through this study. The participants demonstrated their agency and authority to narrate their experiences of marginalization and oppression while navigating sometimes conflicting areas of support.

It is important to note that this research, although interpretive due to the self-reflective nature of the study, by providing the near full *testimonios* allowed for less researcher interpretation (Delgado-Bernal et al., 2012). Capturing the voices of Gay Latino men, through *testimonies*, represented a way to bring the voices and experiences

of the participants outside of the margins both society and education. *Testimonios*, thus, offer the opportunity to develop and expose theory in the flesh and urge the audience to action as "the voice that speaks to the reader through the text the form of 'I' … that demands to be recognized" (Beverley, 2000, p. 548).

Description of the Site

San Francisco State University (SF State) serves an ethnically and linguistically diverse student population. In a report published in *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* on June 25, 2009, "SF State ranked 12th nationally by awarding 2,710 baccalaureate degrees to minorities during the 2007-08 academic year…an 11% increase from the previous year" (SF State News, 2009). Students come from throughout the greater Bay Area. In fall 2013, undergraduate Students of Color comprised up to 71% of the SF State student body (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2013). According to university statistics, incoming freshman for fall 2014 who were first-generation made up 36.1% of the population. Moreover, 25.3% of incoming freshman identified as Latino, Hispanic, Mexican, or Chicano (NCES, 2013). The United States Department of Education has officially recognized the demographics of the student body by certifying SF State as a minority-serving institution. According to SF State, it is committed to the retention and graduation of economically and educationally disadvantaged students who are, in fact, the majority of students on campus (Office of University and Budget Planning, 2013).

Participant Identification and Selection

The participants were current SF State undergraduate students. Participants' were all juniors or seniors. I had regular access to a population of students who are currently

enrolled at SF State. As a current academic advisor, I was able to contact students who fit the criteria of the study and who I knew as past or current advisees. I established the criteria for participants to be: SF State students currently enrolled, Latino male, and openly Gay and have minimum second-year status.

After approval from the University of San Francisco and SF State's institutional review boards, I made contact with the first student (Appendix, A). The selection process began with students enrolled, through the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), participants one, two, and six respectively. This purposeful sampling method was intentional. By using purposeful sampling, the researcher selects participants for their willingness and availability (Creswell, 2008). Purposeful sampling method is also a data collection method used in choosing participants and sites as they are "information rich and because they can best understand the phenomenon" (p. 214). EOP is an intensive academic advising and tutoring program for low-income, first-generation students. I am a full-time Academic Advisor and Mentor Program Coordinator for EOP. However, enrollment in EOP was not a selection criteria. Therefore, I was able to recruit participants two, four, and five from the general population.

The initial contact of one student led to his informing three others of my study. Emails were exchanged with the initial four selectees and a location to meet was established to discuss how the *testimonio* process would proceed, and I requested they read and sign a "Consent to Participate" form. I also recognize that any future empirical replications can pragmatically assess the reliability, validity, and generalizability of research findings (Peterson & Merunka, 2014). Continuing with purposeful sampling, I

contacted two past advisees who also agreed to take part in the study. Meeting locations on campus were agreed upon and participation agreements also signed.

A group of 10 undergraduate students who identify as Gay Latino males were originally intended to be recruited for this study. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant who agreed to participate. Outreach continued with emails and visits to several student organizations including; Queer & Trans Resource Center, Queer Alliance, and the Gender and Sexuality Studies Department. Colleagues who I felt also may be in contact with potential participants were also contacted and provided with a brief introduction and description of the study (see Appendix B). Three additional students expressed interest in participating in the study, however, convenient times due to class scheduling could not be established. Below is a summary of my participants followed by their biographical information.

Introduction of Participants

Participant Profile (Ordered Chronologically by *Testimonio* Session).

Pseudonym	**Age**	**Year/Class**	**Major**
Frank	22	4th -Junior	Communications
Mario	21	3rd –Junior	Journalism
Zacharias	22	4th-Junior	Latin@ Studies
Alfonso	22	5th –Senior	Broadcasting
Victor	26	5th-Senior	Creative Writing
Alfredo	20	4th-Senior	Biology

Frank

I was born in Los Angeles, California in 1993. I'm 22 years old and started SF State in fall 2011 and am a communications studies major. My family is "traditional," two parents and two siblings, I'm in the middle. Both of my parents' value education and family, are dreamers for something better. I lived in the MacArthur Park neighborhood until I left for college. It's a Latino neighborhood with crime and a black market. I felt contained, didn't leave much. My dad is from Oaxaca, Mexico. He left the family when I was in 5th or 6th grade. He worked in a denim factory and was very patriarchal. He didn't let my mom work or go to school.

Frank described his understanding of growing up poor as, "I knew I was poor, everybody had brand shoes, and I had $10 shoes." In school, he said he received good grades and even graduated high school feeling very supported. Unlike his mother, who like my mother, had to leave school in Mexico to care for siblings. When Frank described how he and his brother, the first person to whom he told he was Gay, kept this a secret from his mother for a few years, I could also relate. It was nearly the same story of how I told my brother before I told our mother. Frank continues his studies and hopes to graduate next year. As another member of the Multicultural Center group, friends with Mario, Victor and Zacharias, I was amazed at the growing layers of support I was witnessing.

Mario

I am 21 years old; 3rd year student journalism major here at SF State. I'm the youngest of three, have two older sisters. I was born and raised in Los Angles California in a Latino community that's about 98% Latino. It's an old factory

> community that suffered from white flight and now has gangs, a bad economy, and poverty. My mother is from Durango, Mexico but grew up in Tijuana, Mexico. She immigrated in the late 1980s. She only completed elementary school and works as a janitor at a movie theater at night. My father is from Jalisco, Mexico, never met him.

When I met Mario in 2012, as his advisor, I knew he was a very determined student. His activism was very apparent, and he owned his academic goals and achievements. Even after three years, his participation in this study revealed so much more about him, I felt as if I was getting to know a whole new person. I had no idea SF State had a Multicultural Center until he started working there. Sadly, my first visit there was not until our first *testimonio* session. I revealed to Mario that I was dismayed at myself for not being aware of his work in that office or the valuable resource it has been in his journey in that space, as shared in his *testimonio*.

Zacharias

> I'm Zacharias, born in 1993 so I'm 22 years old. I was born and raised in Riverside, California. My neighborhood was a mixture of African-American and mostly immigrant Mexican families. I am the oldest grandchild and have a younger sister. My dad dropped out of high school and is from Penjamo Guanajuato, Mexico. My mom went to high school and is from Latierra de Jalisco, a ranch called Tonales, both were farmers. They were in the US five years when I was born.

Zacharias recently became openly Gay, about a year ago according to him. His childhood was replete with homophobic behavior from men in his family. In school, he

says he tested well but didn't take tests until it was time to prepare for college. Zacharias expressed how he was surprised someone was asking for information from Gay men about school. As we began his second *testimonio* session he stated, "I get to talk about myself, and I've never sat with a person like this. It's different talking about myself this way. This has been my life, never really thought about how awful or good; those are reflections."

Alfonso

> I was born in the Central Valley of California and raised in the town of Stratford. I have two older sisters. My parents were field laborers in Mexico. My father is from rural Guadalajara, Jalisco Mexico and passed away when I was 11 years old. My mother is from Nayarit, Tepic Mexico and has since moved from field labor to eldercare.

Alfonso described his childhood as "feeling things were different" as he shared early memories of poverty. Coming from a small town, Alfonso said he knew everyone from elementary through high school. He described himself as a good student, active and even raised his own steer as a Future Farmers of America (FFA) member! One of his earliest memories of knowing he was Gay was in 2nd grade, "Kids wanted to be macho, do sports, and kiss girls. I was attracted to male cartoon characters." Alfonso entered SF State in fall 2010 and graduated right after our sessions. I am proud to have played a role in Alfonso's academic career. As his advisor for two years, I watched him grow, adjust and confront challenges. In spring 2015 he graduated with a degree in Broadcast and Electronic Communications Studies. He hopes to work in journalism and/or television.

Victor

> My name is Victor, 26 years old, graduating senior majoring in creative writing. I was born in Mexico and raised in San Jose, California, undocumented. I started school in the U.S. from Kindergarten. My mother migrated first. I stayed with my grandparents. I crossed the border after my grandparents, also undocumented, and didn't have a formal education. I grew up in a community of undocumented people. I thought everybody lived like this then realized life was different when I started school. I transferred to SF State to finish my last two years and be close to my grandparents.

I met Victor when he spoke in one of my graduate courses. I had no idea of his affiliation with the Multicultural Center at SF State until Mario introduced me to him as a possible research participant. He described his passion and journey as a writer as a connection with others who recognize voice, Queer, Latino. He has traveled and is frequently in demand as a speaker. Victor is also a published writer. He speaks from several layers of experience as a Gay Latino, undocumented status, author, and student. Again, I recognize my ignorance about this growing group on campus, these men with stories to tell. After this study, Victor graduated with an undergraduate degree in creative writing.

Alfredo

> I grew up in Southern California and went to eight different schools. I was a 'B' student in elementary school. I lived with my mother until the eighth grade, then foster care. My mother was born in the US and my maternal grandparents are from Jalisco, Mexico (grandfather) and Sinaloa, Mexico (grandmother). I'm

> Native American on my father's side, but he passed away before I was born. I started at SF State in fall 2012, I'm 20 years old and a biology major.

Alfredo had been my advisee for his first two year of college. I had always known him to be friendly and that he had been involved in a short-lived informal LGBTQ group with other former foster youth. I was honored that he shared some of his personal story of growing up in that system. Alfredo said he liked school In K-12 he played sports and was an overall good student. When it came to preparing for college, I asked how he was supported. He stated, "I got myself there." He admitted he chose to live in San Francisco because he wanted to be far from his family.

Data Collection

The method of data collection for this study consisted of recorded *testimonios* of six Gay Latino males. By dialoging in this manner with each participant regarding their perceptions of support while in college, I captured their campus experience as it relates to their reality. Additionally, I have provided my own autoethnographic (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) *testimonio* (see Chapter I). I ensured my participants that interviews would be conducted in a timely and efficient manner. *Testimonio*s consisted of two sessions. In session one (T1), established at no more than 30 minutes, participants were asked to discuss their background. I asked them to describe family history regarding geographic location while growing up, education level of parents, and what conditions were like where they were raised. Additionally, I asked the participants to briefly describe what school was like for them from K-12. During T1, I engaged in dialogue with the participants in order to develop a rapport from which to begin the *testimonio* process and extended this process to other participant contacts. The purpose was to help

inexperienced participants feel comfortable and competent in the role of providing their personal experiences (Park, 1993).

Testimonio session two (T2), was established at 45-60 minutes, and dates, times, and locations were established at the end of T1. Challenges arose, for both sessions, but primarily for T2. Unexpected illness, family emergencies, and class schedule conflicts all came into play. However, constant communication and consistent flexibility on my part was key to completing the data collection process. All sessions were recorded using both an audio recording and a voice capture application on my mobile computer. Differing locations were established based on participant comfort, accessibility, and noise level. For each session, I reminded the participants that they were free to stop the process at any point. Locations included the Richard Oaks Multicultural Center (ROMC) and Caesar Chavez Student Center (CCSC), both on the SF State campus; Tierra Mia Café in San Francisco; and my home due to its proximity to campus.

The last session, *reflexionés*, my personal favorite, was originally planned as a reflection of the *testimonio* process for participants and myself. Reflection has always been an established part of not only my training as a teacher but also a very key component of my doctoral studies. I prepared food and invited the whole group but only three arrived. Our reflections and conversation turned to a discussion of how I deeply related to each of their stories regarding my own family and academic experiences. Moreover, we began discussing the common theme of how each (all six) felt the institute played almost no role of support, from their perspectives. It was at this point I asked if I could record this discussion the benefit of which influenced how I would structure chapter five under "Perceptions of the Institute*."* These perceptions, along with those

from T2 sessions, I felt, are an integral part of the recommendations to my audience. The following is a chronology of the study and outline of the data collection process followed by the *testimonio* protocol:

- December 2014: Submission of "Request for IRB Verification of Exempt Research Involving Human Subjects" forms to USF and SF State;
- January 2015: After IRB approvals, contact participants and arrange an initial meeting. Inform participant of study and deliver informed consent form for signature; and
- January 19th to April 26, 2015 Data collection.

The process is outlined in the following table:

***Testimonio* Sessions**

Participant	Session	Location/Time	Session	Location/Time
Frank	T1	Tierra Mia Café 1/19/15 3pm 30 Minutes	T2	ROMC 2/10/15 4:30pm 61 Minutes
Mario	T1	ROMC 1/29/15 6pm 28 Minutes	T2	ROMC 2/4/25 4:30pm 39 Minutes
Zacharias	T1	CCSC 1/29/15 5pm 32 Minutes	T2	CCSC 2/3/15 93 Minutes
Alfonso	T1	My Home 1/31/15 1pm 40 Minutes	T2	My Home 2/16/15 62 Minutes
Victor	T1	ROMC 2/5/15 4:30pm	T2	ROMC 4/16/15 2pm

		16 Minutes		59 Minutes
Alfredo	T1 & T2	My Home 4/9/15 6pm 71 Minutes	----	----
Reflexionés Zacharias Mario Alfonso	Final	My Home 4/26/15 2pm 44 Minutes	---	---

An interview protocol for T2 was developed using guiding questions discussed with participants prior to recording the *testimonio*.

***Testimonio* Protocol**

The following questions were asked of every *Testimonio* participant.

1. What types of support structures are you currently aware of for queer Students of Color? In what ways do you experience academic support at San Francisco State University?
2. How would you describe attitudes on campus regarding queer Students of Color on campus?
3. How would you describe the attitudes on campus from administrators, faculty, and staff regarding queer Students of Color on campus?

Data Analysis

The T1, T2, and *reflexionés* sessions amounted to 9.6 hours of recordings. I transcribed the T1 sessions myself. However, given my full-time work schedule and time commitment required for transcribing audio to text, I made the decision to send the remaining T2 sessions and *reflexionés* session recordings (5.3 hours) to a transcription agency in San Francisco. The return of the transcriptions was timely and with few errors.

I tested each recording against some of the "inaudible comments" and Spanish to English translations for each transcription to ensure accuracy.

Coding

Text Coding Legend:
TQ1-TQ4= *Testimonio* Question 1-4
RQ1-3= Research Question 1-3.
I= Commentary based on Institute Perception

Using text segment coding, I coded for *testimonio* questions first (TQ1-4) for each transcription of T2. I then coded for research questions for each transcription (RQ1-3) Specific aspects of the research questions were identified, for example, Race, Gender and Sexuality for RQ1. The process was repeated for RQ2 and RQ3. I then coded for theme identification, generated list one of possible themes and subthemes, and color coded them. I then collapsed the list further taking into account overlapping areas until the final thematic list was derived. Finally, I simply coded (I) for institutional commentary for the *reflexionés* transcription. Overlap of the segments and subsequent collapsing of thematic segments or categories is suggested by Creswell (2008).

Testimonio transcripts and researcher autobiographical transcripts were frequently reviewed prior to submission of the study to ensure sensitivity and nondiscriminatory language. The design for this study is of a qualitative storytelling structure. For this type of study Creswell (2008) suggests *procedures* be described as opposed to traditional *methods* format in more scientific inquiries. Additionally, "*findings* [are] discussed rather than *results"* (p. 281).

Instrumentation/Validity/Reliability

To ensure accuracy, especially of the transcribed recordings. I randomly tested each transcription against the recorded *testimonios*. Moreover, prior to transcription, I

listened to each recording and took notes after each session. In qualitative research, reliability is centered on triangulation (Merriam, 2014). Data was scrutinized against the theoretical frameworks and literature reviewed as well as follow up questions asked to the participants for clarification. The data was carefully double checked for accuracy and alignment with reported findings. All aspects of the study have been noted and documented to ensure validity.

Digital *Testimonio*

An additional method of experiencing portions of the *testimonio* data is that of the Digital *Testimonio* (Benmayor, 2012). I have incorporated a sound bite from each participant with the use of QR (quick response) codes. Internet URL's were generated with the *testimonios* sound bite embedded onto them. The QR codes are located in Appendix D. Scanning the code will link the reader via the internet to a specific *testimonio* recording. If the reader has access to a cellphone, iPad or other form of technology with a scan-bar application, the QR code can be scanned and the reader is linked to the participant's *testimonio*. The QR codes are free and the recordings are available to all internet users. Benmayor (2012) claims:

> That digital testimony is a type of digital story that expresses core epistemologies of Latin@ Studies and involves a collaborative process of production and creation. Different from traditional autobiography or conventional digital storytelling, where the author works individually and independently to product the narrative, digital *testimonios* involve various dimensions of collectivity. (p. 510)

This new contextual layer of having the ability to actually hear the voice of the participant adds a whole new dimension to the research and its ability to reach its audience. Reading an individual's narrative and lived experience is important, but typically, in a dissertation study, only quotes or paragraphs are provided in text and

analyzed. Therefore, by implementing this particular type of Digital *Testimonio*, a more contextualized experience and *actual voice* is provided by the research.

Protection of Human Subjects

My application to the Institutional Review Board at the University of San Francisco as well as the Human and Animal Protections Protocol at SF State was approved as exempt from additional review. As the researcher was also a participant, anonymity is not required. However, anonymity was established throughout the transcription, data analysis and reporting/discussion of findings. Confidentiality and informed consent was maintained throughout the process by signature of participants on the informed consent form. All data, including recordings, field and tracking notes, and transcriptions were kept in a secured location to protect the participants.

Chapter IV

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of using *testimonio* as the primary methodology was to gather data that allowed for reflection within a social justice education framework (Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012). The act of giving *testimonio* allowed the participants to offer as much rich data possible, allowing me to better align the findings with the research questions for this chapter. The *testimonio of the participants* not only provide deep personal experiences, but also impart a sense of urgency. The voices of the six participants now have a space from which to be heard. Their collective voice also addresses "conditions of subalternity to which their *testimonios* bears witness" (Beverly, 2000, p. 572). The opportunity for my participants to have a voice from the subaltern is one of the driving forces of *testimonio* sharing. The participants not only revealed the ways in which their lives are impacted by their campus experiences as Gay Latinos, but also shared their stories of self-resolve.

Testimonio, as a methodology, allowed participants to tell their full stories, rich in detail. For the purposes of this study, and as a result of my process of analysis, I pull excerpts from their stories and present them in this chapter. The excerpts are organized by the themes that emerged across the various *testimonios*. These powerful statements are presented here, along with excerpts from recorded *testimonies.* The analyses of the research questions are provided in the following chapter.

There are several salient themes identified for my first two research questions. Findings based on research question one are described under the following themes:

identity and notions of self, intersectionality, and campus spaces, which includes experiences inside and outside the classroom. Findings based on research question two are described under the subheadings familial support, supportive campus programs, social support, and a subsection on the lack of support for Gay Latinos. Findings based on research question three are presented as *Reflexiones*, and this subsection describes the ways in which the institution of SF State fails to recognize and support Gay Latinos.

Research Question One

The following subsections address the following question: How do the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality play out in the experiences of Gay Latino male students in a higher education setting?

Identity and Notions of Self. Each participant in this study was very clear about two dimensions of identity that exists for them on campus; Latino and Gay. The following *testimonio* excerpts emphasize their experiences of multidimensional identity. For example Mario, who recognizes his multidimensional identity, had an unexpected experience as a Gay Latino in college.

> I do identify as queer, and I do identify as Chicano. When I got to the classes it was totally different. It was a bunch of brown kids. I was totally surprised. I was so surprised because I didn't think that many students of color, especially Latinos, would be in that space, and especially hood kids. That's something that's not expected.

This example demonstrates that Mario was not expecting to engage with other students who share his Latino cultural identity. Identity is constructed differently, in different spaces. Navigating on campus through Gay identity can be different from navigating

through Latino identity. Depending on the other people in the space, one identity may take center-stage.

Victor notices that, similar to Mario, some Gay Latino men will selectively navigate their identities on campus, emphasizing either a Latino, or a Gay, identity. Though Victor feels his Gay and Latino identities are more intertwined, he observes that some Gay Latino men feel compelled to maintain separate identities. He says,

> It's really interesting because a lot of times we try to compartmentalize our identity saying I'm just going to be queer right here ... I feel like for me I navigate the world with that identity intermingled. I feel like everything affects both directly. I feel like a lot of times specifically with queers or specifically Latinos or heterosexuals, they feel like you somehow owe an alliance to either, and a lot of times they want to pick one.

Victor notes the pressure to function in one identity rather than both. This pressure can come from within identity groups, such as LGBTQ and Latino communities, or it can result from practical concerns such as Victor's immigration issues. Victor continues:

> For me, I am queer, but I am dealing with so many other things first other than my queerness. It's not a priority for me to be part of a group that just focuses on sexuality I didn't really connect with that; IDEAS is predominantly what I was dealing with at the time, being undocumented. I wouldn't necessarily say that they don't understand it because it is queer, I'd say they understand it because it's brown. Specifically in the context of the U. S., because I feel like we have a lot of struggles here. Specifically

> now with immigration, immigrants are so popular for people to talk about,
>
> I feel like it comes from a racial perspective as opposed to sexuality.

Victor has a very powerful sense of his identity. I was very interested in his description (below) of how he chooses to prioritize the way he navigates his campus experience while dealing with his sense of multidimensional identity.

Victor has a nuanced sense of his identity and he was candid about the ways he must prioritize his identities as he navigates his campus experience.

> It's an interesting navigation for me, personally. There could be a group of brown people over here and a group of gay people over there. I know I can function here as another brown person, but am I going to function as the queer brown person? Probably not. I'll probably downplay the queerness, I find myself doing it a lot. It's real selective, it's almost like group policing. Especially in office departments. It's like I'm going to be the down Latino, but I'm not going to be the gay down Latino. A lot of times even navigating my department, my stories I feel that they have queer elements in it, but they're predominantly about brown people and immigrants. It just so happens that I am queer writing about them.

The testimonio excerpts above describes the complex layers of identity that Victor and Mario experience as Gay Latinos. Zacharias echoes these sentiments in his understanding of the intersections of race and sexuality. He says,

> Yeah, not just with the whole being queer thing, but also being Latino because there’s a big nativist attitude and the people are scared to express their own opinions. But in my mind I kind of have them as separate, I have to keep remembering that they’re intersecting, overlapping, yeah…because being queer

> and Latino has different layers but take one of the layers away, would I still be comfortable there?

Victor, Mario, and Zacharias understand their identity in a multidimensional manner, and there is also an understanding of how these multiple identities compete and intersect.

In their higher education experience, different aspects of these men's identities, intersected, prompting a process of *selective identity*. This highlighting one identity over another is found in the data. For example, in Victor's *testimonio*, he discussed "compartmentalizing" identities; "I'm just going to be queer right here…"I feel like a lot of times, they [queers, Latinos, heterosexuals] want to pick one." The participants selectively, based on different campus scenarios and spaces, chose whether to draw on his Latino or Gay identity. Yet, they still understand their notion of self as multidimensional. The following *testimonio* excerpts provide another layer of these participants' stories that further demonstrates the intersectionality of their identities.

Intersectionality: Race, Gender, and Sexuality. For these six participants, the aspects of their identity, race, gender, and sexuality played out on differing levels not only in their campus lives but their personal lives as well. This intersectionality is complicated by pressure to conform to the mannerisms that define traditional gender roles and expectations. Frank, Alfonso and Zacharias share poignant experiences of the external pressure to conform to these norms. Frank recalls a childhood experience about sexual identity and masculinity:

> My Dad, is a Denim factory worker from Oaxaca, Mexico. He left my family when I was in 5th or 6th grade. He was very patriarchal, he didn't let my mom work or go to school. I got a lot of perspective about men from dad, I don't want

> to do what he did; it makes me think about my masculinity/manhood. I don't see my dad as the epitome of manhood. I knew right off the bat that being Gay was not good, to survive I guess. Especially 'cause I knew that something wasn't right with me.

In this example the pressure to conform, to the hyper-masculine norm set by his father, led Frank to believe that something about being gay was wrong and needed to be hidden.

Similar to Frank's experience is Alfonso's stories of being around his father as a child. Alfonso said he felt uncomfortable around his father because they had nothing in common. His father like to work on cars where Alfonso did not. He states, "I never wanted to be with dad, junk yards, fixing cars, feed deliveries; I felt awkward, nothing to talk about." Alphonso's reticence to participate in traditionally masculine activities with his father is similar to Zacharias' story from a childhood experience.

> My Tios (uncles) would call me "delicado" (delicate). Other boys played soccer but it wasn't my thing. That was one of my dad's biggest enojos (angers). Soccer is a Mexican thing, I hated it. Dad said, "te compro libro pero solomente juegas futbol." He would try to bribe me with offering to buy me a book but in exchange, I had to agree to play soccer.

Zacharias came to SF State because he felt he would be more comfortable in what he understood as a very Gay friendly city. The homophobic attitudes he experienced as a child provided him with the impetus to seek out spaces where he would be comfortable being gay. Unfortunately, college campuses are not immune from gender norms.

These stories demonstrate how race and gender intersect in each man's identity. Frank, Zacharias, and Alfonso share stories from their childhood of dealing with a layer

of identity and notions of self in the form of masculinity and to a larger extent, homophobia. For them, these experiences provided a backdrop of what they experienced on campus. The following excerpts present the on campus aspects of the participants' stories thus far. They bring the intersecting facets of identity; race, gender, and sexuality into the real spaces on campus which they have experienced.

Campus spaces. All participants are seasoned students, with a minimum of two years in college. In their testimonies, they share a range of experiences with campus life, both academic and social. Each participant is in a specific academic department. Each participant also afforded himself an opportunity to try out campus resources and gauged them based on their own notions of self and identity. The following excerpts demonstrate how experiences in and out of class are different. In academic spaces, the participants felt the intersectionality of their identities was recognized and respected. Outside the classroom, the participants were required to navigate their identities separately and felt less recognized and supported.

Experiences outside the classroom. The *testimonio* of the participants reveals that many feel isolated outside the classroom. Frank explains a negative experience when he arrived on campus:

> I did feel isolated. My freshman year I lived in the dorms. I had never been around so many white kids in my life. My whole life I grew up in West Lake where it is very Latino-Immigrant. So to step out of that neighborhood it was a shock. I didn't think it would affect me, but you start realizing that when you're 1 out of 5 brown kids on the whole floor it was isolating.

I asked Frank what role the institution played a role in his experiences. His *testimonio* regarding this issue provided further insight into how he experienced and recognized privilege and power of dominant groups centered on race and gender.

> I feel like my only option was La Raza or MECha. That in itself says a lot about the institution and how much freedom influenced creating certain spaces. Not that they don't have the agency of the students to create spaces but I've seen how students are isolated. I don't think this institution does a lot to encourage that kind of growth and that's why student groups have formed. That is reflective when we say marginalized, I'm assuming all people of color, disabled students, and Trans gender students? No I don't think the university prioritizes marginalized students. I think it's a lot about the University's interest in students when it comes to using their money, but they don't invest it in the students themselves. We were just talking about the Ethnic Studies Building. We have so much need for improvement in that building but then we look around the campus and what are we promoting? We're promoting sports. The athletes have better uniforms! We've renovated the gym! I don't think they're ever going to have the cultural capital to truly understand what it means to be this multidimensional person in this country.

Alfonso, Mario, Frank, Victor and Zacharias also noted a lack of institutional support. For these men, the LGBTQ resources encountered on campus meet their needs. Alfonso explains how he struggled to find a club that represented his Gay Latino identity:

> I looked mostly for Latino representations on campus, not really

> Gay/Queer. I realized very quickly, I think maybe the first few weeks after I got here at San Francisco State that the queer clubs here sucked. I thought, "Okay, well I'm not even going to bother joining." I guess that's one thing that for sure didn't meet my expectations at San Francisco State. I thought it was going to be everyone was going to be super out, and visible everywhere, like the gay community, but at San Francisco State it's not visible at all.

Mario's *testimonio* echoes this frustration.

> The whole time I've been here… a lot of these programs I've mentioned have a lot of gaps in them, specifically the cultural gap, that's the main gap. For example, the Queer Resource Center will talk about issues of queerness, of being Transgendered, all these various sexual identities. However, they've never hit on ideas of folks of color or communities of color.

Zacharias' expresses a similar sentiment:

> I feel like they're not actively seeking to help us or to do anything. They're just saying it just because they have to, and if they are providing services for some sort of queerness or something it'll be towards more like middle-class white queer people. You saw the (Queer) alliance downstairs. I think it was a white kids.

For these men, both the LGBTQ, and the Latino, community spaces were insufficient. However, several participants have found safe spaces within their academic departments. Zacharias, for example, did not find himself represented in the LGBTQ community but rather the classes in the Ethnic Studies departments. Additionally, Mario, Victor,

Zacharias, and Frank found the one space they could bring their full identity. These men converged on the Richard Oaks Multicultural Center and made this the space where they did not have to *select* an identity and simply be themselves.

Experiences inside the classroom. The *testimonio* of the participants reveals that while many feel isolated outside the classroom, many Gay Latinos feel supported and safe inside the classroom, and in their respective departments. Zacharias explains,

> I remember first day of school I saw what I perceive to be queer people and a lot of Latinos, so I felt comfortable. Even in class where I would see queer Latinos, and they would just chill. Here people they weren't afraid to be who they were. They were just being themselves and it was just cool. Classes full of Chicanos, or it was mostly Chicanos. And this girl, she was sitting next to me, her and her friend .... I've had him in a lot of classes and he's a queer Latino. I walk in and ... I always look really nervous, but I guess I was really extra nervous because that was my first day and they said, "Oh, I like your backpack, where you from?" and told them I was from SoCal. They made me feel comfortable.

Just as Zacharias found comfort in his Latino Studies classes being around other Latinos and queer Latinos, Mario's minor department, *Race Resistance Studies*, offers him a safe and supportive space that values the intersectionality of his identity.

> Race and Resistance Studies, that needs outer support because it's a little bit more theoretical, and I've received it, and I've had professors there that are on point and they'll answer my questions, and they'll be really supportive, and even out of office hours will see me and they'll say, "Hi."

> That's a big deal. I care about that, walking down campus or even being outside of campus, like shopping, and they'll say, "Hi." They'll stop and they'll have a conversation or something. That's really nice to see.

In this department, Mario does not feel that he needs to segment his identity. He can identify as a Gay Latino and feel supported as a Gay Latino.

Zacharias shares his sense of belonging with his Latinos studies courses.

> It made me feel good taking these Latino Studies courses, and even like in regular classes there was more representation and they were active, the Latino kids or the gay kids, I don't know, it was like a more positive attitude here, like more acceptance where it'd be both of these groups are taking charge or they're not afraid to be who they are and they're very open very positive, just to see Latinos in the class leading the group discussion. I've always known how I felt about, like I was telling you earlier about my ethnicity or how it relates to racism and stuff like that, and so with my Latino studies courses, because I have been taking them since day one, it was very inclusive and they were, like it was a positive thing, and I wasn't afraid to express how I felt or afraid I had to start off the discussion, like, "Well, I'm Mexican," or, "My parents are immigrants." I just felt comfortable with my being Latino, expressing my opinions on my personal experience or my own identity.

Mario and Zacharias had positive experiences in their overall major or minor courses within Ethnic Studies. Their testimonio reveals that the connections these men make with academic spaces contrasts with the lack of support they feel in other LGBTQ or Latino spaces. Though common, this was not the case for all of the participants. Victor shares

his experience of the dominant power structure within his major department and how he resists that structure through his writing.

> I went to Creative Writing and I think it's been challenging to the fact that most of the student population within that department is very white. Even the faculty is very white. In my two years here I think I've only had one brown professor within literature. And their literature wasn't even considered Creative Writing. It was under Latino Studies. For me, I think that's more the challenge within attitudes of being queer and brown is that I'm in these classrooms, the standard is white and those are the narratives that get predominantly selected. Here I am writing in Spanglish or writing about growing up queer in the hood and having students not really relate to that work and saying "Why are you doing it like that? I didn't understand that sentence." I wouldn't necessarily say that they don't understand it because it is queer, I'd say they don't understand it because its brown…I feel like it comes from a racial perspective as opposed to sexuality.

Victor's challenge is to bring multidimensional identity outside of the margins. But as he reveals, an atmosphere of non-inclusive academia presents a barrier.

The stories of campus spaces reveal how the intersections of identity play out for these participants in various ways. Their *testimonios* demonstrate complex insights of identity and notions of self. The participants not only experience the campus as mere students, but as Gay Latino men who seek safe academic spaces, and community outside the classroom.

Summary

The participants have confronted issues of race, gender, and sexuality during their college experience. Outside of the classroom they sought community but had difficulty finding organizations that recognized and supported all the aspects of their intersectional identities. Inside the classroom and in departments and programs such as Ethnic Studies, Latino Studies, Race Resistance Studies, the Multicultural Center and MECha.

The participants' multidimensional identities and notions of self as college students are based on how they experienced both the supportive and the oppressive campus spaces. The result of their experiences, as they pertained to identity was that of *selective identity*. Participants challenge the dominant power structure that exists and critique this structure based on their experience of seeking out resources that they can identify with as Gay men of color. Gender roles and expectations as well as social mores were already well defined by these men, the role homophobia and cultural heteronormativity extending from their childhood experiences into higher education.

Thus far, the *testimonio* of these participants includes confronting homophobia and heteronormativity as well as marginalization of queer students of color. The intersections of race, gender, and sexuality from the participant's stories reveal a dialogue with identity, intersectionality, and campus spaces. What resonates throughout the above excerpted *testimonios* is the overlapping impact of race, gender, and sexuality within the overall institute and the lack of attention to that impact from the institute. The following section reveals the participant's critique of how the differing resources of support, in class and out of class were either inclusive or non-inclusive for queer students of color.

Research Question Two

The following subsections address the following question: What types of support systems or lack thereof, are reported by Gay Latino men in a higher education setting?

Types of Support. This section of the chapter will focus on systems of support identified by the participants. Every participant reported or critiqued a type of support in one or more of the following thematic Systems of Support: *Familial Support; Building Community; and LGBTQ Resources and their lack of Diversity.*

Familial Support. Several participants enjoy familial support. For example, Alfonso is very close to his family, as evidenced by his many visits home throughout the school year. Alfonso's family is also very supportive of his being Gay. However, as a child, he felt uncomfortable with his mother possibly thinking he was attracted to other boys.

> My family is basically just my Mom, oh and my two sisters. Yeah, they've been really supportive, especially my Mom. She's proud that I'm up here. She just thinks that it's better than being in the valley, that's for sure. Of course she wants me to come back now. I've always had the full support of my Mom in whatever I do. She's really awesome.

Mario also has a very supportive family. Like Alfonso, he shares a story about his mother. Alfonso shares what his mother said when he was preparing to leave Los Angeles, "I want you to have some experience, but eventually I know you're going to come back." He shares,

> My family is still highly supportive, very supportive, really, but at the same time it's a lot of pressure. I'm the only person in my whole family that's been to college. I'm one of four that's graduated high school. Whenever I go home, it's about, "Mario, the one that's making us proud," and, "Mario, the one who's hitting it on the dot." It's cool, they're huge support.

Similar to Alfonso and Mario, Frank's family support stems from a small family and close relationships he has with each member. Frank explains,

> And my family has always been there for me so that's not something that has been up in the air. My mom has always been there for me. My sister, mostly she's been there for me. Actually no, she's always been there for me. My brother, he was the first one that I ever told I was Gay explicitly.

Like Alfonso, Mario, and Frank, Victor also receives familial support, though his comes from extended family. Victor is the only undocumented student in the study, the only transfer student, and the eldest, 26 years old. Victor is very close and connected to his grandparents who were his guardians as a minor and with whom he still resides.

> For my family, I feel like it's really difficult. I'm the first one to go to college and I'm graduating in May. They've been super supportive in that they made it known if I ever need something they'll help me. If I am financially in need they will help me. They want me to be in school. There was a time where, I needed, to work I needed money. I wanted to take a break from school, get money and then go back to pay for it. They said "you can't, you should just go and I'll figure it out." They helped me. They helped me move here. I think my family structure is really different because I grew up with my grandparents. My grandfather is 85, my

> grandmother is 82. I decided to come here and graduate and transfer in two years, because I know it's my responsibility when I graduate to get a job to help support them because they've always helped me. I feel they're really supportive because they see themselves reflected in that. All their labor is paying off that I am here. My grandparents can't help me out in ways other students get help, but emotionally they're there.

Like Victor, Zacharias shares a story of support that includes his grandparents. He had constant reminders from both his father and grandfather to go to college. He recalled from childhood that there were frequent reminders about going to college.

> I feel like my support has been my family after finally accepting the fact that I was going to come up here. All my familia came together and everybody gave me a $50 or a $20 on that last weekend I was home and they said, "Here's some extra paper, here's some extra notebooks." Everybody's constantly checking up on me. My family will call and ask "How are you doing?" My mom checks in almost every damn day (laughs) twice every day for two and a half years, and then this semester every third day.

Unlike the other participants, Alfredo's background includes the foster care system. I informed him he did not have to comment about family support, although he did provide some biographical information during his part I session. He chose not to speak about his biological family.

In addition to family support, or in Alfredo's case in the absence of family support, the participants told other stories of resilience and resolve. From social media to safe campus resources, the participants carved a way for themselves as college students.

Supportive campus programs. The *Project Connect Program* and the *Multicultural Center* are hubs for many Latino students, including my participants. However, these programs do not promote themselves as a resource for any particular group of students based on ethnicity, rather, the programs are either income based such as *Project Connect* or open for all students.

Alfonso describes his experience looking for support through on-campus programs.

> I looked mostly for Latino representations on campus, not really Gay/Queer. I do know there is the *Queer Alliance*, and that's basically it. I was more wanting to help out the community…I asked an acquaintance of mine who is in it, 'Do you guys do any charity work?' she said we just basically sit and talk. I know *Project Connect*. That was a really awesome club. It was mostly girls, very little guys, Most all of them Latino's. Most of my support, well not really support, I don't know, more like a "Big Brother-ish." It would be for example, you, and then you and when I was in *EOP*, and Alejandro Garza, who is the Director of *Project Connect*. I thought that was pretty cool, each organization run by Gay men of color.

The *Queer Alliance* organization and others are also discussed by the remaining participants. What is important to note is the similarity of the other participants to Alfonso's experience when seeking support on campus.

> Support wise, there's not really anything for Gay, specifically being Gay. There's not really anything to that kind of common interest (community-service) .That where I met most of my friends that have lasted a pretty long time, through

> *Project Connect*. Jasmine I met in *Project Connect*, and then I was her roommate for two years. Cassandra, Jasmine, and Cindy, all Latinas. We moved apart, but we still talk.

Alphonso's community began with a question about the Queer Alliance program. Through his persistence, he found not only a program from which he could participate in community service, but also found other Latin@s with whom to build friendships.

It would be a disservice to not recognize that Mario played an integral role in Victor's, Frank's, and Zacharias' journey towards finding support on campus. Victor states:

> I only knew Mario, I didn't know anyone. I didn't even know how to select my classes. I think Mario was a huge support, other students aiding me and telling me okay, this is what you need to do. It was definitely something positive, at the end of the day I built a lot of relationships with people on campus and became part of different organizations. I even got my job with networking with other students. I think that in general has been good.

The time I spent at the *Multicultural Center* and witnessing the participants' friendship, and common goals, had a very meaningful impact on me. It was an honor to witness how they had found and supported each other as friends, and Gay Latino students.

Social support. Friendship and other social supports played a role for many participants. Mario found support with other students with whom he shared housing. All six participants had strong support socially, which did not come from living on campus; recalling Frank's experience of isolation when he lived on campus. All six participants had a supportive experience living off campus in which one or more

roommates were connected by common programs such as *MECha, Project Connect*, or the *Multicultural Center*. These supportive connections were positive forces which allowed for familiarity of identity on campus.

Mario states:

> My roommates are a huge support system. They've lived very similar lives to mine. They're all students of color that are poor. The one guy that I live with is from South LA and he's queer. I would say that's really a big support for me, my living situation. That's an amazing thing to think about. They all used to be part of MECha, which is Moveimento Estadiantil Chicano De Aztlan. Then I was around activist circles.

In addition to his family, Zacharias centered his *testimonio* of support on people he lived with in a rented home near campus. After discussing the way in which he experiences support from his family, Zacharias shared how he was befriended right after he arrived in San Francisco.

> There's this Mexican couple, and they're both first-time college students, and so when I came into contact with them, because I was going to rent a room in their place. I didn't fill out the application for the housing at the time because I didn't know that I was going to come up here because I didn't decide until so late. I contacted them and they've been so helpful and go out of their way to help me and make things easier for me.

Alfredo found support by connecting with other former foster youth. As his surrogate family, this network seems to have been, and still is, very integral in how Alfredo has persisted in the last three years.

> At San Francisco State I've experienced social support, definitely through the former Foster youth program with a lot of my friends. A lot of them are really supportive of being Gay in general. They had their own LGBTQ student group. I used to be a part of that actually. I think it was freshman year. I used to be a part of it. Which I really loved that. It was really nice. I just had a busy schedule so I wasn't able to attend to a lot of it. I think they ended it actually. I actually really liked it. We would just talk about being Gay and Gay activists and things to educate yourself about how we got here and the riots and everything that used to happen back then.

Social support also extended to online forums. In addition to former foster youth, Alfredo built his own community of support online. He shares,

> These people are very up front ... Yeah, queer and Latino. I feel like that's maybe comfortable with accepting who I am and just to be more open about it. These people are very proud of who they are and there's no shame. I feel like that's made me more comfortable so that's been my support system I guess online. Some of them have turned into real-life friends, so it's like a social support. I started reading up on queer theory and these people, not just like gay guys, people with more complex identities. That's helped me just accept it or be more open about it or just be more comfortable, because they're there.

Similar to Alfredo, Zacharias found support online. He built his online community through blogging. He shares,

Because I started that off as a place to go look at pretty pictures online, and then it slowly turned into a Chicano art blog. I started following more blogs that did

Mexican stuff that I could relate to, and then I started following blogs and they would turn out to be queer people. They would re-blog queer stuff like, Queer Theory, or queer issues. Then I started following Latino queer people, and now my blog is mostly like people who are very aware of social issues and a lot of bloggers and a lot of queer Latinos. I follow mostly queer Latinos, and some of them are from SoCal, and some of them are from NorCal. That's how I came in contact with Mario because he's one of the queer bloggers from LA. I noticed he went to San Francisco State and so then I followed him, and then he messaged me, "Oh hey, we go to the same school," and then we started talking.

Lack of support

LGBTQ resources and their lack of diversity. Family, on-campus programs, friends, mentors, and online communities all provide support for the participants in this study. It is also important to note where support is lacking. The following excerpts reveal how the men in this study initially sought out LGBTQ resources but ended up disenchanted with them.

Mario is an outspoken student activist and advocate of disparate issues on campus. He is very well informed about campus resources for students and is either currently involved, or has been involved, with the *Richard Oakes Multicultural Center*, the Queer Resource Center, including E-R-O-S (Education and Referral Organization for Students), the *La Raza Student Organization,* SKINS (*Student Kouncil of Intertribal Nations*), and the *Latino Coalition,* which is all the Latino organizations. Mario's affinity for campus resources that serve Latino students, and students of color in general, was starkly different from his experience with Queer student resources. He shares,

> Queer Resource Center will talk about issues of queerness, of being Trans, all these various sexual identities. However, they've never hit on ideas of folks of colors or communities of color. In my time working here, I've seen a lot of gaps in that programming, just because there's no talk about one being of color and being queer, which is very different than being white and being queer. There's conversations that will happen on very basic things, which are things like ... Let's see what ... Safe sex for queer people, things like that. Even when talking about EROS, they don't engage the conversation of race ever really. They have collections that aren't inclusive of folks of color. They'll have workshops without folks of color, which is highly problematic to me. There's a lot of these gaps, which for me, working at the Multicultural Center have been vocal about them, but most of the time we've found that we could be vocal about these things and they'll continue with their programming, but ultimately we want to fill those gaps in. We're inclusive of a lot of different things. I can say we do a lot and we do too much sometimes as the *Richard Oakes Multicultural Center*, but I feel like there's urgency within the university. There's a lot of students of color. There's a lot of Latino students, which is my people.

The fact that LGBTQ resources continue with their current programming, which Mario says lack diversity, speaks to why Mario and other participants are not attracted to those programs. Victor's experience of LGBTQ resource programs supports Mario's claim of a lack of diversity.

> I just know they have student groups or resource centers, like the Queer Resource Center and stuff like that, but that wasn't something I was really interested in. I

> think they were tabling. I didn't see myself reflected in that or I didn't see myself being part of that… so a lot of time what happens with queen resource centers specifically is that they base their resources based on the fact that we are all queer and they don't really export the multi-dimensions of identity. There really isn't any critical perspective on race and class. This is happening with a lot of queer resource centers where they become predominantly white and I feel like that group is predominantly white and that's how they connect. For me, I mean I am queer, but I am dealing with so many other things first other than my queerness that that wasn't a priority for me to be part of a group that just focuses on sexuality. I didn't really connect with that.

Victor, like Mario and Alfonso, found they could not identify as students of color with *The Queer Resource Center* or *Queer Alliance*. Frank shares,

> I know of the Queer Resource Center. I just walked in there today. I've seen some of their events and I just got turned away from them because most of their panels are white, so I couldn't really identify with them that much. Yeah, one of the panels was a transgender one. Another one, I don't know what they were, but they did them in the Multicultural Center. That's probably the only resource I know of for queer people overall. For Latinos, probably like RAZA, MECha and the (Latino) fraternities I think there's like, I think two of them, or three. But they're not really resources to me. Not my type of resources. I feel like my only option was RAZA or MECha.

Because he felt excluded from *The Queer Resource Center* and the *Queer Alliance,* MECha was Frank's primary resources for support. He and other participants do not see

the intersectionality of their identities reflected in the LGBTQ resources on campus. This is also the case with academic support services. The participants in this study note a lack of culturally responsive support systems.

Lack of Academic Support. As with the LGBTQ organizations, the participants in this study feel academic supports do not recognize their needs as Gay Latinos. Frank felt he created academic support for himself. He says,

> Academic Support? I think I've had to create that for myself in the sense that I really think of my support system at its height being MECha but within MECha, I've had to discipline myself academically. I didn't really have any study habits before school and I think that a lot of them were that I just got lucky and made the right friends with teachers and stuff. I utilized tutoring when shit hit the fan and I didn't understand anything. Usually my academic support was my friends. I didn't even talk to counselors because first of all, I was too embarrassed. I'm talking about anything that had to do with anybody else telling me about my academics. It's embarrassing. I'm already brown. I felt like it was expected that I wouldn't do good. So then if I show up to tis advisors' office, give them my damned transcript and it's going to have an F, a No Credit. They already have ... in my mind, I think they have a preconceived idea of what they expect and then they look at my transcript and then it's confirmed. So I internalize.

Frank's internalized racism reveals a need for students of color in general to have access to support. Accessible support resources need to take into account the challenges and barriers of students of color, as well as the challenges and barriers of LGBTQ students of color face.

One such program is the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). Given my understanding of the admission requirements for EOP, Zacharias and Frank would have qualified to participate and receive intensive services such as Advising, Tutoring, and Workshops. When I asked why he did not apply in his semester of admission Zacharias states he wasn't unsure. Zacharias had little understanding of the available systems of support, specifically for students of color or LGBTQ students. He demonstrates this by saying,

> Just coming into SF State I already knew that there was EOP, but I didn't apply to the program, "Okay, well people have access to that." All I know is first time (freshman), low income, particularly people of color. Then I knew the MEChA ... I knew sort of as far as the Latino organizations go I know there was MEChA because I was in MEChA in high school, so I thought, "What, there is a MEChA chapter there so I can probably go and ask for help there," but I think that was it. Because Mario came here, so then we started talking, and then we finally met up. He said, "Well, let's meet me at the *Multicultural Center*, and so we came and he introduced me to some people from MEChA. Through him in one day, I met six different people from different organizations and he walked me through some of the building, and that was in November, yes, 2014.

When asked about his academic support, Alfredo's experience is similar to Mario, Victor, Frank, and Zacharias.' Alfredo made choices about where he accessed his support. He attempted a Queer resource briefly and he had no prior knowledge of resources for Latinos.

Alfredo's ultimate choice was a resource program that for all intent and purpose, is not structured for Queer Students or students of color, but rather income based. He shares,

> I'd definitely say EOP in general. They're very helpful. They keep you motivated. They do. I don't know why, I feel like when people don't know what EOP is. I'm always telling people. Oh regards to my academics. Yeah. One of my professors, Ms. Hilty she was pretty supportive actually. Especially when one of my friend's passed away in college. He was part of EOP and was one of my best friends. I've kept in contact with her after that. She wanted to make sure I was okay and I didn't lose courage. My motivation for school. I was really appreciative of that. EOP is my life pretty much. I'm always in there. I know of Queer Support, there's E-Gay, there's the LGBT alliance? I don't know if it's an alliance, it's the Queer Alliance, I just remember E-Gay used to meet in the bottom of the Tower building, the science and technology center. I think it was just a little group of people. I only went three times, but it was there for support. Some of my friends would always talk about going to E-Gay on Wednesdays. Latinos (groups) I'm actually not familiar with any. I feel like there are, but isn't there like a ... I don't know I never even looked into it.

Supportive campus spaces are in integral part of any college student's experience. For these participants, the LGBTQ resources for students turned out to be the opposite of what they expected. The stories of finding support on campus are an example of the need to document even more narratives on college campuses.

Summary

All six participants maintained some aspect of positive family support, social support, or both while in college. Each student also revealed a strong drive for creating self-support and constructing their own communities of friends or online.

All six participants navigated resources that billed themselves as LGBTQ or a resource utilized by students of color. Many noted a lack of sensitivity within these organizations. Few felt supported in both the Gay and Latino aspects of their identity.

Research Question Three

To what extent can testimonios of Gay Latino men inform administrators, faculty and staff in higher education about issues of racism and homophobia?

Reflexionés: Perceptions of the institute. The candor of the following statement from Zacharias illustrates a recurring theme from the *Reflexionés* and *testimonios*. "I feel like from the institute, there isn't support." Zacharias speaks from a place of alienation as a result of his experience on campus. Navigating power structures in higher education, and the institute's influence on social relations regarding race, class, gender, and sexuality remains a challenge, especially for Gay Latino students of color (Anderson & Collins, 2015). The following section is a summary of the last reflection (*reflexionés*), gathered during an informal session with the participants. These *reflexionés demonstrate that the participants do not feel they are supported as Gay Latinos at SF State.*

The most succinct evidence of the lack of institutional support came from Alfredo. When I asked him if he thought SF State played any role in engaging him as a Gay Latino, he simply stated "It doesn't." Mario shares a similar perception,

> To be a little bit more specific, there are certain things that me as a queer Chicano/Latino I go through, and because there's so many intersecting things, intersecting identities, a lot of the spaces that I've seen or tried to be a part of don't address those things. It [institute] will address the fact that I'm queer, but they have such a hard time doing the Latino and the queer thing. They have such a hard time doing it.

Mario notes the difficulty he has trying to get SF State to recognize the intersectionality of his identity as a Gay Latino. Victor notes a similar struggle with his identity that includes his undocumented status. Victor daily navigates his experience on campus through this aspect of his identity. He explains,

> I.D.E.A.S is an AB540 group, AB540 being undocumented students in California. They're a student organization which basically focuses on educating and connecting undocumented students with different resources on campus. They don't necessarily have a space, they're a student organization so they just go and meet in a classroom. We're working on trying to potentially create an undocumented resource center for students because that is very much needed here.

While Victor finds support through I.D.E.A.S, it is clear that this group does not receive formal support or resources from the institution. Victor describes another place on campus where his undocumented status is a struggle. When describing the financial aid office, he states,

> Financial Aid is probably one of the most uncomfortable spaces in this university, and I think I say that because one, I have a lot of friends that

> are undocumented, but even if you're not undocumented, they are so mean, and I don't know why they're so mean. They act like it's their money that they're giving you. They're just not helpful at all. Administration, not helpful either.

University administrators should be made aware that an office which plays such an integral role in student's lives, such as financial aid, is perceived this way. Victor's *testimonio* could help the institution develop such an awareness. Campus climates must shift toward servicing populations with increased need, visibility, and accessibility. Because student populations have diversified on college campuses (Renn, 2010), the onus belongs with the institute to further change practices of development and support. This is especially true for LGBTQ students of color.

Similar to Victor's experience with I.D.E.A.S., Frank's perception of institutional support was informed by his experience of a lack of support. Speaking about peer support groups, he says,

> Not that students don't have agency to create [spaces] but I've seen how students are isolated like me in college. I don't think this institution does a lot to encourage that kind of growth, that's why these groups have formed.

Student support groups form in response to isolating conditions on campus. Frank and other participants continue to experience isolation and marginalization even within some of these groups, in this case, within LGBTQ support groups. Jayakumar (2009) makes it clear that institutions of higher education have the ability to resist this.

> Although institutions of higher education reflect the sexual prejudices of the societal culture at large, they also have the capacity to resist or even

> transform these troubling viewpoints…It seems that there is something beyond student attitudes that maintains a confining environment where LGBTQ students continue to feel a disconnect to the rest of the university (Jayakumar, 2009; Love, 1999; Rankin, 2003; Rhoads, 1995a).

The implication is that the institute must be accountable to the LGBTQ community. Alfonso shared his experience which shows that currently, the institution is not accountable to the LGBTQ community. "I thought it [LGBTQ Resources] was going to be visible everywhere, like the gay community, but [at] San Francisco State, it's not." Alfonso expected that accessing LGBTQ resources on campus would be easy, but it was not.

As we can see, all six participants, had experiences that could be vital to making change at the institute. To a large extent, the *testimonio* of Gay Latino men might inform administrators, faculty and staff in higher education about issues of racism and homophobia. For example, with access to these testimonies, student Affairs and other units would be better informed about how to develop strategies to meet the needs of Gay Latinos at SF State.

Summary. The above findings support the purpose of research question three. There are important critiques of the institute's support of Gay Latinos that can be useful to administrators, faculty and staff. These include general statements of "there isn't support" to addressing the lack of a continuously changing campus climate. The participants reported how many resources and institutional offices presented challenges for them as Gay Latinos, and in one case, as an undocumented Gay Latino. While the participants revealed how they

found ways to navigate within the campus community, they also noted that there is little to no investment for them, as Gay students of color, from the overall institute.

Conclusion

My six participants revealed their personal life stories and shared intimate details of how they identify as multidimensional individuals with strong notions of identity and self. Participants also shared personal campus experiences revealing connections I found I had with them. As Latinos, as Gay Latinos, or as first-generation college students, we found many challenges in our higher education experiences. They shared ways in which race, gender, and sexuality intersect and how campus spaces, or the lack thereof, directed them along a path of support which they created for themselves. What this study has allowed for is an exploration of the path of support for these men while examining the institute and its role in these explored experiences.

The unique way in which this *testimonios* revealed how *selective identity* took place was unexpected. While navigating specific aspects of the campus, and when seeking support, the participants were selective in how they chose to identify with that resource. Choosing whether to attempt to access a resource, as a LGBTQ student of color was ultimately a choice based on, to a greater extent, their Latino identity and, to a lesser extent if at all, their queer identity. The selection made did not relate to their multidimensional identity, because none of the participants found supports systems that addressed the full intersectionality of

their identities. The participants made choices based on what each saw as a best fit, and to some extent, the only fit.

The final chapter will analyze these findings. The research question one discussion is based on the theoretical framework outlined in chapter one. The research question two discussion will be a dialogue with the findings and the reviewed literature. Discussion of research question three is based on a reflection session of the *testimonio* process.

Chapter V

Discussion, Recommendations Conclusions

Introduction

This study was driven by my personal and professional experiences of alienation, isolation, racism, and heteronormativity on college campuses. What I sought was a method to help other Gay Latino males in higher education to find a way to deal with feelings of alienation and isolation while in college. Additionally, this study can become a resource which allows administrators, faculty, and staff in higher education to understand the experiences of Gay Latino students on campus. It is my hope that as higher education practitioners examine this research, they may better understand some of the complicated challenges facing Gay Latinos. It is my further hope that the participants have imparted, through their *testimonio,* information to better understand the challenges of finding truly accessible support for all marginalized students in higher education.

This chapter will provide first, a discussion of research question one findings based on the following frameworks, (CRT) Critical Race Theory (Parker & Lynn 2006), Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) (Bernal, 2002) and Queer Critical Theory (QueerCrit) (Misawa, 2010) as outlined in chapter one. Second, findings based on research question two will be discussed along with the reviewed literature. A summary of findings, and discussion, based on research question three are included in this chapter a**s** *Reflexionés* (reflections). During the *reflexionés* session, the participants passionately shared how they envision the institute making a more concerted effort when it came to investing in queer students of color. Therefore, participant recommendations as excerpts from the

reflexionés session have been included in this chapter. Finally, recommendations and conclusions based on this research will close the chapter.

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is two-fold. First, to document *Testimonios* of Gay Latino men in a higher education setting. I use the central tenets of CRT as a theoretical lens from which to analyze their experiences of support, or lack thereof, at a University campus. I am specifically using two offshoots of CRT for the purposes of this study: Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) and Queer Critical Theory (QueerCrit). Second, to address the paucity within the body of scholarly literature which links race, class, and gender with academic and/or social support for Gay Latino males in higher education.

Summary of the Study

The impetus for this study emerged from my experiences of isolation and alienation and my practice as an academic advisor. Over the years I have listened to anguishing stories of isolation and alienation from several Latino males, a few of whom, based on their described experiences, I was able to relate to, as a Gay Latino in college. Six participants agreed to take part in this study. All six self-identified as Gay, Latino, and male. The pipeline of support examined in this study is a branch of the overall pipeline of education which assumes a smooth flow from end to end (Rodriquez & Oseguera, 2015). However, for participants in this study, the institution lacks investment for Gay Latino students of color. Their *testimoni*o is a snapshot of the overall challenges for Latino students in higher education and across the pipeline. Moreover, paralleled with the challenge from the institute as Latinos, is the additional challenge of being Gay students of color. The choice to proceed with *Testimonio* as my methodology was based

on the qualitative nature of this study. The traditional ethnographic model of the researcher and subject left out the very personal aspect of seeking to richly explore areas of support accessibility in higher education for Gay Latino males.

Additionally, I wanted to validate both the ways in which the participants identify and their experiences on campus, as they are both very crucial qualities in a *testimonio* methodology. Reyes and Rodrigues (2012) confirm that one of the important characteristics of *testimonio* is the role of memory and reconstructive epistemology. The critical reflection of each participant's experience and how it relates to their reality is key to this study. Thus, this methodology is more relevant than that of traditional ethnographic research (Delgado-Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona 2012).

All six participants reported supportive family and or social networks which they discussed in a positive context. All six participants also reported a priori or a posterior knowledge of campus resources of support accessibility. Five reported an exploration of two of the main campus resources for LGBTQ students. These same participants uniformly reported that these were spaces in which they could not identify due to the lack of students of color being represented. The sixth participant had accessed a different LGBTQ support group on campus but it was a short lived experience.

All six participants did however actively seek out and access other support resources which they could identify with, as first-generation and Latino students, but not necessarily as Gay students on campus. A process of *selective identity* occurred because the multidimensional needs of their identity were not being met. This alternate choice was appropriate and the participants used selective identity to fit into programs such as the College of Ethnic Studies (Raza, MEcha etc.), as opposed to the LGBTQ campus

resources. Participants identified a pervasive lack of investment for them as LGBTQ students of color by the institute.

Discussion of Research Question One: How Do the Intersections of Race, Gender, and Sexuality Play Out in the Experiences of Gay Latino Male Students in College?

Theoretical framework. The *testimonios* of all participants contain the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality coupled with experiences of marginalization and oppression. This section analyzes participant *testimonio* and how these intersections can be examined through the theoretical frameworks of CRT and two of its extensions; LatCrit, and QueerCrit. This section will also discuss the five tenets of CRT. Finally, I have applied CRT's components to analyze how participant responses support all three frameworks.

The Four Tenets of CRT. The first tenet of CRT is *The Intercentricity of Race and Racism with other forms of Subordination* (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This tenet allows for the interrogation of the social texts which complicate cultural issues and problems. LatCrit is concerned with addressing the decentered areas of race issues such as language, sexuality and immigration to name a few (Espinoza et al., 1990). The example from this study stems from marginalization due to lack of resource diversity when it comes to participant identity. For example, Frank experiences the intersection of the Gay and Latino aspects of his identity when trying to access support resources on campus. He says, "I feel like my only option was La Raza or MECha. That in itself says a lot about the institution…" All of the participants found it challenging to navigate and identify with layers of non-inclusiveness. What the participants were, and still are looking for, is a resource that fulfilled the needs of their multi-dimensional identity as Gay and

Latino. Each of the participants in this study struggled with the dominant narrative and ideologies of racism, heteronormativity, and homophobia, the combination of which often result in the oppression of sexual minorities (Sheared, 2010). The resistance to dominant narratives, and oppression of sexual minorities, point to the need for a social justice lens to further examine this process.

A *Social Justice* discourse, the second tenet of CRT, similarly intersects LatCrit with QueerCrit. QueerCrit allows for the examination of marginalization and oppression by allowing for the inclusion of not only race, but also class, gender, sexuality, language, and immigration (Hayes, 2014). The *testimonio* in this study provide a focus on issues of race, gender and sexuality from students of color. This allows for the incorporation of personal knowledge of oppression for Latino students through the use of oral history (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). Moreover, the participants by default, remain part of an increasingly decreasing population in higher education, that of declining Latino males in higher education.

Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) assert that Latino males in higher education are showing lower retention rates. My participants all had early support to enter college. They also showed resilience in constructing their own or adding to an existing support system as exampled in their *testimonios*. Additionally, Saenz and Ponjuan state that Latino males face cultural and gender mores which are challenging while in higher education. Gloria, Castellanos, Scull, and Villegas (2009) reported a "lack of empirical literature regarding Latinos' experience in higher education to the extent that practitioners are limited in understanding Latinos in the context of Latinas and other racial ethnic minorities (Gloria, Castellanos, Scull, and Villegas, 2009, p. 318). But as

Gay Latinos, the men in this study face a double challenge not only because of race, but sexuality as well. For example, in his *testimonio,* of Alfonso states, "I thought it was pretty cool, each organization run by Gay men. Two of them being people of color." Alfonso's statement also supports the third tenet of CRT, *The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge*. This tenet positions Alfonso's perspective, his experience, and how he identifies, as assets (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Alfonso recognizes the cultural deficit of a dominant white heteronormative culture within campus resources, and recognizes other Gay Latinos, in positions of power, as a good thing.

The fourth tenet of CRT, the *Centrality of Race and Racism in Society,* is relevant regarding the impact of LGBTQ programs on campus. Mario's *testimonio* provides a succinct framing of racism and marginalization for him. "The whole time I've been here… a lot of these programs I've mentioned have a lot of gaps in them, specifically the cultural gap, that's the main gap." Racism and dominant power structures have a cumulative impact for LGBTQ students of color. According to CRT, this impact is a characteristic of American society (Lee, 2008). By moving beyond the boundaries of any one identity, Mario is fluidly experiencing cultural gaps, marginalization, and oppression within campus resources through intersecting frameworks of CRT, including QueerCrit and LatCrit.

The last tenet of CRT, *The Challenge to Dominant Ideology* is very central to this study. The challenge of the participants in the study mainly stemmed from resistance toward the institute in the form of creating their own spaces and support systems to meet their multidimensional identity needs. They met these challenges by confronting racism,

heteronormativity, and homophobia. For example, Victor describes his experience with his major departments' students and faculty as being "very white." He continues, "Here I am writing in Spanglish or about growing up queer in the hood and having students say "Why are you doing it like that?" I didn't understand that sentence." His writing faces rejection by those in the department due to the dominant narrative present. As a result, Victor applies both a LatCrit and QueerCrit framework in his examination of his department. We see the CRT tenet of *intercentricity of race and racism* with other forms of subordination emerge as he resists racism and homophobia in his department.

Some of the literature reviewed for this study reveals that institutes lack agency when it comes to policies and practices of inclusivity regarding LGBTQ students and students of color on campuses in the United States (Jagose, 2009; Yost 2011). Prior to this study, the voices of these men were silent on the matter of LGBTQ students of color who deal with this lack of agency, a universal and dominant discourse on their campus. The counter-narratives based on participant *testimonio* from this study can be used to bring to the forefront those stories that speak to the tenets of CRT (Misawa 2006).

Summary. Thelin (2004) reports that identity is a recent shift in the substantial diversification of college students, "…from majority male to majority female; to include a higher proportion and diversity of students of color and visible populations of immigrants, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ students" (p. 579). The present study is an informed way to address Thelin's assertion by capturing the real experiences which point to what this shift in substantial diversification in higher education really looks like for these participants. From this perspective the participants were able to share how they identify and what their identity means. The theoretical frameworks provided a scaffold

for me, as a researcher, from which to provide analysis of the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality.

The tenets of CRT, and its extensions LatCrit and QueerCrit, were analyzed for their underpinnings related to race, gender, and sexuality. This analysis includes a discussion of the *testimonios* that revealed how the experiences of the participants dialogue with resistance and exposure of marginalization of queer students of color. Moreover what is revealed is the social impact of heteronormative and homophobic practices and attitudes in higher education.

The *testimonios* support the five major tenets of CRT, including LatCrit, and QueerCrit. The intersection of race, gender, and sexuality play significant roles in the lives of the participants as students. They must navigate the challenges and pressures of heteronormativity, homophobia, and racism facing them as queer students of color. (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Lee, 2008; Jagose, 2009; Yost 2011; Gandara & Contreras, 2009). Analysis of their stories support the findings and theory of current literature in the field (Parker & Lynn 2006; Misawa, 2010; Reyes and Rodrigues, 2012; Delgado-Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona 2012 and Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Dominant discourses such as racism, heteronormativity and homophobia are not only challenged by participant reactions to them but resulted in their persistence thus far. The next section will discuss areas of support contextualized by the literature review for this study.

Participants in this study experienced the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality in how the institute regards them as queer students of color. Through their *testimonios*, the layers of multidimensional identity and selective identity were revealed. Documenting their knowledge of how these participants view themselves within the

context of the institute and the meaning they make of their experiences served to expand the purpose of this study. From this expansion I have learned that indeed, documenting the personal knowledge and perceptions of marginalized individuals as they interact with the institute can help others in their same position.

Discussion of Research Question Two: What Types of Support Systems or Lack Thereof, are Reported by Gay Latino Men in a Higher Education Setting?

First generation status and family support: A pipeline of support

Each participant self-identified as a first-generation college student. Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Teenzini (2004) discuss first-generation college students and how systems of support impact these students. The researchers emphasize the first-generation college experience and the identified educational benefits of a supportable space in college. Additionally, academic and out-of-class experiences of support during college differs along ethnic and racial dimensions. Latino males, many of whom are first-generation college students, face cultural and gender mores which serve as challenges to accessing and succeeding in higher education (Pascarella, 2006). Coupled with first-generation status is the role of the family for participants in this study. As the first link in the pipeline of support, family support was identified to be a foundation for college persistence.

All participants reported their family heritage being at least one generation from their roots in Mexico. Therefore, it is important to note that Mexican American male identity is created within a collectivistic culture where the family system is at its core. (Ojeda, Navarro, & Morales, 2011). Additionally, the researchers assert that:

> Given the importance of *la familia* in Mexican culture, educational research has found a strong relationship between familial factors and education among Latino students. Family is often mentioned as a source of support and comfort in times of hardships for Latino college students (p. 217).

These roots of Mexican culture and the support reported from immediate family of five participants and one extended family member, by one participant, not only established a foundation for support, but is also central to how they are validated as first generation Latino students.

Ojeda, Navarro, and Morales (2011) identify specific *Cultural Elements of Success*, including,

- Fluidly moving between an ethnic-specific student group and predominantly White classroom.
- Engaging in monthly community projects that address Latina/o issues.
- Engaging in a course assignment that requires examination of family and cultural values relative to the curriculum.
- Talking about one's family with a faculty member over coffee or lunch.

Each participant engaged in at least three of the four cultural elements described above and as exampled in Chapter IV. Participant's stories showed strong support of family on differing levels. First, support as the first family member to attend college. Second, support of their sexual identity. This allowed the participants to establish themselves as persisting students, which is supported by extant literature. Yet, what still remained are

the institutional challenges represented by marginalization within race, gender, and sexuality.

The participants had a head start on their ability to persist and resist when it came to their campus experiences. Family support was found to be key in this study. This support paved the way to carving out even more areas of support such as peer social networks. The next section discusses this drive to create self and social support.

Social and Self Support. The participants in this study built their own support structures on campus. Whether it was classroom peers who became roommates or coworkers who became friends, solid frames of social support were established. Yet, research indicates that Latino males are not persisting in college despite rising enrollment of Latin@s (Saenz and Ponjuan, 2009). The researchers have analyzed factors such as "rejection" of academics achievement by Latino and African American males as a form of resistance to dominant white culture. They also identify quantified factors of social and structural pressures that Latino males face during the K-12 years. Saenz and Ponjuan also acknowledge the important role of family and social networks.

> Accordingly, *familismo* can work as a socio-cultural asset [and] for Latino males, the value of *familismo* can be an asset because of its correlation with strong social and family networks, which can ultimately be accessed to support their academic achievement (pg. 63).

Additionally, the participants were able to form a new *familia* after arriving on campus. The testimonios support Castellanos and Gloria (2007) who state:

> *Familia* is a central component to Latina/o students' experiences from which they gain cultural affirmation and specific navigational

> strategies to negotiate the host culture of academia. By building family-like systems, Latina/o students can garner and maintain their academic momentum.

Unfortunately, the work of Saenz and Ponjuan, and others do not include a Gay Latino male demographic. Given the strong evidence of the importance of family and social support for Latin@s in higher education, in addition to the positive influence of family and social support of participants in this study it is important to note the need for future research that is more inclusive towards LGBTQ students of color. This study also reveals an identified need for capturing and analyzing LGBTQ student's stories.

For example, in his *testimonio* regarding social support, Alfonso stated, I looked mostly for Latino representation…Support wise, there's not really anything for being Gay." His perception of the campus climate is addressed by several researchers. The above quote represents Alfonso's perception of the campus as heteronormative which supports the work of Rankin & Reason, (2005) and Steven's, (2004). Findings of this study also showed that four of the six participants formed a unique friendship and alliance after being disenchanted with the LGBTQ resources on campus.

Their experience of developing alternative social networks illustrates the findings of Pascarella et al., (2004) and Terezini et al., (1996). Their research, based on academic and out of class experiences, found that development during college has different dimensions for unstudied groups such as LGBTQ students. The dimensions referred to as "distinctive," as the researchers put it, are race,

ethnicity, and first-generation status, all relevant factors which impacted the participants in this study. Thus far, a discussion of the pipeline of support for this study includes strong cultural, and familial ties; and a drive to create and develop strong elements of personal and social support. The next section discusses the role of academic and resource support explored by the participants.

Academic and Resource Support. Queer students of color face challenges when it comes to racism and heterosexism and lack of support structures (Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Whitt et al. 2001). When it comes to the institutes' role of reinforcing positive learning and social outcomes for queer students of color, a better racial understanding is needed (Kumashiro, 2001). Kumashiro also asserts that "If educators are to address queer students of color and challenge both racism and heterosexism in schools they must work through these paradoxes" (p. 2). The paradox for my participants lies in the outward language of the institute regarding increasing and acknowledging issues of diversity. Whereas, based on the *testimionios* in this study, racial understanding, and my own conclusion of racial understanding coupled with a lack of truly understanding the needs of queer students of color is the paradox.

The intersecting frameworks of CRT, LatCrit, QueerCrit and multidimensional identities of the participants require the need for campus programs to acknowledge and support an inclusive inter- and intra-campus climate. For example,

> Mario: Queer Resource Center will talk about issues of queerness, Trans, all various sexual identities. However, they've never hit on ideas of folks of color or communities of color…We can say that all the queers are going

> to the Queer and Trans Center, however, then if you get into other spaces like the Women's Center, does that mean queers don't go there?
>
> Victor: I didn't see myself reflected in that (Queer Alliance)…they don't export dimensions of identity
>
> Frank: That's probably the only resource I know of….for Latinos, RAZA, MECha and Latino Fraternities. Academic support? I think I've created that for myself.
>
> Zacharias: I feel like they're not actively seeking to help us…You saw the (Queer) alliance downstairs. It was white kids.

These statements support the work of Steven's (2004). His research found that gay male students of color experienced rejection within the gay community. When racism is attached to being Gay, this complicated "maneuver[ing] through homophobic tendencies in racial communities and racial prejudice in Gay Communities" including the university environment (p. 202). Furthermore, although this study does not generalize to larger populations, the *testimonios* support Stevens' research.

Although there have been changes in sexual prejudice over the years, experiential components of racial diversity can facilitate a decrease in sexual prejudice on college campuses (Jayakumar, 2009). Student resource organizations represent the social climate within the institution in the form of affinity groups and how they communicate and interact among the various students, faculty, staff, and administrators (Rodriguez & Oseguera 2015). Therefore, the axiom I posit remains that race and sexual orientation are relevant factors when exploring the

marginalizing conditions for Gay Latinos in higher education. The conditions here, based on my findings, are the support systems in the institute. Therefore, I conclude that indeed, further examinations of accessible support systems in higher education should be based on and analyzed through the experiences of queer students of color.

Summary. Participants acknowledged that certain campus resources are not accessible because as LGBTQ students of color, they cannot personally identify with that resource. The result is a climate, within these resources, of non-inclusiveness and marginalization. Furthermore, an academic support system such as advising that is underutilized by Latinos due to cultural norms or deficit thinking have been examined by several researchers (Pascarella, Pierson, Woniak, &Teenzini.2004; Vázquez & Garcia-Vázquez, 1995; Gloria, Castellanos, Scull, & Villegas. 2009; and Rodriquez & Oseguera 2015). Examining the work of the above researchers provides insight into analyzing the experiences of my participants. However, their individual component research, (i.e. first-generation; Latin@; Latino male) belie the fact that race and sexual orientation intersect on several levels in higher education. Therefore, this study reveals these issues in a more inclusive manner e.g., LGBTQ resources, as source of support Gay Latinos, is lacking.

Discussion of Research Question Three: **To What Extent Can Testimonios of Gay Latino Men Inform Administrators, Faculty and Staff in Higher Education About Issues of Racism and Homophobia?**

Central to identifying challenges facing these participants is the lack of information for institutions. This deficit of knowledge about marginalized students on campus impacts how institutes deal with LGBTQ students. What results is a lack of

ability to meet the needs of these students especially for LGBTQ students of color (Miceli, 2005). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) discuss the importance of CRT and how it challenges separate discourses such as race, gender, and class. However, Renn (2010) asserts that research on LGBTQ and other marginalized students is scarce and that alienation and isolation is a reality for many LGBTQ students of color. Evidence of this is prevalent in the testimonio of the participants.

Zacharias: Because the university is not meant for us. Right. It's not meant for students of color. Definitely not meant for queers of color. So, you know, you're basically pushing yourself into a space.

Mario: It's just branding.

Zacharias: Yeah. It's branding...

These participant's statements regarding how the institute communicates with the public is critical. Liang and Alimo (2005) suggest, based on their research and recommendations that institutions look to creating positive campus environments. Clearly, the participants in this study would have benefitted from positive experiences in their exploration of campus resources.

The researchers also suggest that administrators should encourage development of enhanced opportunities for groups to interact and have a mutual goal. Close examination of current practices, that may or may not include sexual orientation and race/ethnicity as intersecting factors for students, might aid in the development of such interactions. As the above *testimonio* excerpts show, there is a need for the institute to play a larger role in the growth and understanding of LGBTQ campus resource relationships regarding challenges of isolation and alienation.

The work of Abes, et al., (2007) contextualizes the challenges that institutes must address in today's higher education. "Student Affairs professionals should consider students' meaning-making capacity in relation to campus culture and other contextual influences" (p. 20). The participants in this study clearly identified their needs. They have made meaning of the role of the institute as reflected in the resources programs they attempted to access and found it lacking in relation to their multidimensional identities.

Jayakumar (2009) points out the need to focus on the discourse of LGBTQ students of color, yet, this agency lags behind the heteronormative and homophobic agenda. Renn (2010) noted that Student Affairs attitudes have changed since the early days of expelling homosexual students or mandating them to health care. It is no longer the roll of Student Affairs to punish Gay students. Rather, the role is to have a more holistic and inclusive approach towards the needs of Gay Latinos as outlined by the *testimonios* from this study. Therefore, this study expands the dialogue of how administrators, faculty, and staff in higher education, based on the *testimonios*, can be better informed about challenges faced by queer students of color within the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality. What is important to note is that the documented experiences of my participants clearly state the challenges they encountered. Therefore, my conclusion is that not only is *testimonio* methodology key to documenting experiences, but also key to providing yet another safe space within the institute. This new safe space is the subaltern voice created by my participants. This new space made up of marginalized voices is a key factor in how institutions can not

only be agents of change, but so can the individuals themselves. A partnership. Bringing voices out from the margins so that they inform the institute so they better serve students is indeed a paradigm shift. A much needed and alternative narrative that society can hear, read, understand and especially acknowledge, so that marginalized students are moving toward the center of education and society.

Summary. The participant's perceptions of the institute was revealing. The implications of an institute's lack of perceived support show us that a gap exists between the institute and its dynamic population. The changing demographic of college students, in terms of diversity, has shifted to include historically marginalized students. Moreover, research has indicated the need to address how institutes support marginalized students in order to create positive campus environments (Thelin, 2004; Liang & Alimo, 2005).

Testimonio can be used to inform professionals in education. The results of *testimonio* can be used by institutions of higher education to become better informed about the challenges LGBTQ students of color face and about how LGBTQ students of color have made meaning of their campus experience (Abes, et al., 2007). What follows are recommendations, based on participant perceptions and my own inferences, for future research.

Recommendations for Professional Practice

The participants in this study found affinity and safe spaces from within programs from which they could identify as Latino but not as Gay and Latino. The recommendation for institutes of higher education is to be more inclusive of knowledge of their student's needs. LGBTQ students of color, as the participants

in this study experienced, have the ability to identify not only on a level based on ethnic culture, but on a socio-cultural level as well. Institutes can begin examining their own practice by asking:

- Is our programming for LGBTQ students based on inclusiveness?
- What specific needs do our students have based on how they choose to identify?
- By what means, as an institute, do we capture or document the needs of queer students of color?
- Are in and out of classroom activities regarding inclusiveness and diversity reviewed by faculty, staff, and students?
- Can creating a new safe-brave space by way of documenting *testimonios* be part of an institute's way to address the needs of marginalized and oppressed students?

Additionally, implementation of the following can contribute to enrich institutional practice based on this study:

- Semester or quarterly review of student organization practice; member and non- member evaluation based on diversity and inclusiveness.
- Inclusion of capturing needs (met or unmet) based on identity. For example, questions on course evaluations, and exit surveys.
- Inclusion of queer students of color panels or workshops during new student orientations (currently not present at the institute where this study took place).

- Current offices of diversity and engagement can be modified or newly created to become "Office of Diversity, Engagement and Support."

Recommendations for Future Research

This study explored the experiences of support for Gay Latino males in a higher education setting. This research can be extended to a broader population sample that includes all LGTBQ students of color. A researcher can address this sample through survey and/or large focus group. This broader exploration would still explore the experiences of marginalization students based on race, gender and sexuality. Extended frameworks may be included such as Feminist Theory or FemCrit, and Disability or DisCrit and a Transgender well as the frameworks of this study, CRT, LatCrit, and QueerCrit (Knaus, 2014; Singh, Richmond, & Burns 2013).

Building on the idea of similar future studies, researchers could include multiple institutes examining the race, gender, and sexuality intersections. Stories of isolation and alienation would be captured and analyzed through the above mentioned frameworks. Future analysis might also include administrators, faculty, and staff. Personnel in these positions can add to the dialogue from an institutional perspective.

Finally, a future researcher may examine the pipeline of support of this study more extensively. This research would examine support more closely beginning with *testimonios* of family/guardianship. Exploring multidimensional identities such as first-generation, LGBTQ from the family perspective could map a more detailed pipeline of support. Additionally, following stories of support

through K-12 and into college would also provide deeper insight into the pipeline of support for LGBTQ students of color. This way, the body of extant literature on the educational pipeline for students of color would more inclusive and accessible.

Researcher Reflection

The first idea for this research came from my early practice as an Academic Advisor. I was thinking about how to best support my new advisees. The best recollection is that one day I wrote on a post-it: Construct own support system. Knowing my students were the first-generation college students, I knew that support was key and without anybody to ask pertinent questions, they would have to be self-reliant. The words on the post-it evolved to asking my new freshman advisees, in a first meeting, "Is your family asking you about college?" Thus began the dialogue of support that I continued, with graduated students and to this day with many of current freshman, sophomore, junior and senior students.

Preparing for this study began in my first semester as a doctoral student during Research and Methods class. The original concept was to explore experiences of support for Latino males. I was becoming more aware of research regarding the "Vanishing Latino Male in Higher Education" (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). At that time, over two years as an advisor, I witnessed many Latinos leaving college. Further self-exploration led to the realization that I was my own subject who left college at 19 and faced challenges of racism and homophobia and heteronormativity, although it took 25 years to realize it. This realization led to the slight change to the current study.

I am privileged to have known three of my participants since they were freshman as their advisor. I am honored by all the stories. Getting to know these men was insightful. I saw nearly my same story in each even though I have just over 25 years their senior. The participants in this study shed light on the issues I chose to focus on in my doctoral studies, more than I could have ever imagined. I was pretty sure of my choice of research, and this experience solidified that choice. I sought to hear, personally, what Gay Latino men had to say about their experience; little did I know the impact this study would have on me personally and professionally.

I feel satisfied that my research questions were both answered and addressed by the *testimonio* painted against the backdrop of my theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory, Latino Critical Theory and Queer Theory. Moreover, the paucity in scholarship for Gay Latino males has also been addressed and I hope, enriched. The time spent with my data was daunting yet fulfilling. Finally, I feel that, I know that, I am willing, more than ever, to continue with this fight against marginalization and oppression in higher education.

Concluding Reflection

The *testimonio* process was important and revealing in a few specific ways. First, having the freedom to dialogue and be personal with my participants allowed a level of sharing which would not have been possible in a traditional objective-researcher-subject setting. Second, hearing my participants reveal how they never thought about their campus experience, before telling their stories in this study was more enriching than I can express here. I learned that there was no space from which to voice their thoughts about

campus experiences, the ways in which they identify, and how they sought out support. It then becomes evident that a space needs to be provided for voices such as the participants in this study which need to be heard. I also realized that by setting their testimonios against the backdrop of theoretical framework, what was once an unheard voice becomes an experience that can be analyzed. Thirdly, this analysis can then provide a much broader lens for others to view and understand an individual's experience of marginalization, oppression, alienation and violence. Identity is such an important part of the education experience. Capturing ethnographic data through surveys, applications, and evaluations does not provide the personal interconnectedness of identity and experiencing the institute through how one identifies.

The multidimensional identities of participants in this study, and my own, are validated. We have become more aware of the deep rooted issues in higher education regarding race, gender, and sexuality. It is my hope, as a scholar, and person, that this type of research, the *Testimonio*, is continued. *Testimonio* research has the ability to enrich the field of education as a way to help society gain momentum in the fight against all forms of oppression. It is now my contention that institutes of higher education can look to this study and see how documenting real stories of identity, isolation, alienation can offer ways reduce the number of students who feel the way my participants have shared.

I started writing this work with the following quote by Maya Angelou, "Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with deeper meaning." I still believe her words to be true, now that I have listened to the voices of my participants, and now so can many, many more.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

Exemption Notification - IRB ID: 369

1 message

Christy Lusareta <noreply@axiommentor.com> Mon, Jan 12, 2015 at 8:42 AM
Reply-To: Christy Lusareta <calusareta@usfca.edu>
To: lfgarcia@usfca.edu

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Protocol Exemption Notification

To: Lorenzo Garcia
From: Terence Patterson, IRB Chair
Subject: Protocol #369
Date: 01/12/2015

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 project (IRB Protocol #**369**) with the title **EXPLORING EXPERIENCES OF SUPPORT FOR GAY LATINO MEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION** has been approved by the University of San Francisco IRBPHS as **Exempt** according to 45CFR46.101(b). Your application for exemption has been verified because your project involves minimal risk to subjects as reviewed by the IRB on 01/12/2015.

Please note that changes to your protocol may affect its exempt status. Please submit a modification application within ten working days, indicating any changes to your research. Please include the Protocol number assigned to your application in your correspondence.
On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your endeavors.
Sincerely,
Terence Patterson,
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
IRBPHS - University of San Francisco
IRBPHS@usfca.edu

SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

Administration 471
1600 Holloway Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94132

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND SPONSORED PROGRAMS
HUMAN AND ANIMAL PROTECTIONS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Tel: 415/338-1093
Fax: 415/338-2493
E-mail: protocol@sfsu.edu
Web: http://research.sfsu.edu/protocol

Date: 1/07/2015
To: Lorenzo Garcia

Re: Exemption Notice

ORSP - Human and Animal Protections has verified that your protocol, "Exploring Experiences of Support for Gay Latino Men In Higher Education" is "Exempt" from regulatory oversight and does not require further ORSP-HAP review. Your project is exempt under the following code: 45 CFR 46.101b (2) because it is research involving survey and interview procedures.

You may proceed with your research plan as described in your protocol. Your protocol number is E15-101. If you change your project or have any questions, please contact us ahead of time.

Approval Date: 1/07/2015 **Exempt**

Adverse Event Reporting: All unanticipated or serious adverse events must be reported to the CPHS within ten working days.

Modifications: Prior HAP approval is required before implementing any changes in any of the approved documents. **Data cannot be used if collected before any changes in the research are approved.**

Questions: Please contact ORSP - Human and Animal Protections and the Institutional Review Board at (415) 338-1093, or at protocol@sfsu.edu

Sincerely,
ORSP - Human and Animal Protections
San Francisco State University
1600 Holloway Avenue
Physical Address: 471 Administration Building
Mailing Address: 250 Administration Building
Phone: 415.338.1093
Fax: 415.338.2493 ATTN: Human and Animal Protections
Email: protocol@sfsu.edu
http://research.sfsu.edu/protocol/

APPENDIX B: Letter to Recruit Participants

January 12th, 2015

Hello,

My name is Lorenzo Garcia. I am currently conducting research for my Doctorate in Education at USF. Below is a brief description of what my research intends to explore by capturing the *testimonios* of openly Gay Latino males (sophomore, junior, senior) and their experiences of support at SF State.

Scholarship surrounding racism, homophobia, and support structures (or lack of) for Gay Latino males within higher education is most often devoid of personal accounts or testimonials. For underrepresented Latin@s (Latinas/Latinos), especially if they identify as Gay, their campus experience can be one of isolation and alienation (Bordes, Sand, Arredondo, Kurpious & Rayle, 2006). Thus, as a queer student of color, the struggle to succeed in college is doubly challenging (Misawa, 2005). This research intends to inform the field of education by focusing on the experiences of Gay Latinos (males) in higher education, with specific attention on support service accessibility.

If you are interested in participating or know of someone who is interested in being a research participant please feel free to contact me.

Thank You,

lfg@sfsu.edu

or 415-405-2557

APPENDIX C: Consent to Participate

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

University of San Francisco

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. You should read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, you will sign in the space provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information on this consent form. You are entitled to and will receive a copy of this form.

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Lorenzo F. Garcia a graduate student in the Department of International and Multicultural Education at University of San Francisco. This faculty supervisor for this study is Emma Fuentes PhD a professor in the Department of International and Multicultural Education at University of San Francisco.

WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT:
The purpose of this research study is to audio record your story (*testimonio*) regarding your experiences of support, or lack of support at San Francisco State University. Your participation is voluntary and you may decline participation at any point in the study.

WHAT WE WILL ASK YOU TO DO:
During this study, the following will happen.

1. I will contact you on or around December 29th 2014.
2. We will decide on a mutual location and set up a time to audio record your *testimonio* based on your own experiences as a student.
3. At the decided upon location, I will then ask a short series of questions about your experience of academic and or social support while in college. Your responses will be audio recorded which may take 40 to 45 minutes.
4. Afterwards, we will conclude the interview (*testimonio*).

DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY:
Your participation in this study will involve one possibly two meetings of approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The time of the audio recording of your Testimonio will be not be before the hours of 9am or after 10pm. The study will take place at a mutually decided location either at San Francisco State University or other public setting depending on your comfort level. Audio Recording of your Testimonio will take place between December 29th 2014 and January 29th 2015.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:
The research procedures described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: Certain questions may make you feel uncomfortable. If you wish, you may choose to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time during the study without penalty.

Study records, including audio recordings, transcriptions, and research notes, will be safeguarded

and kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any, reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files.

BENEFITS:

Participation in this study does not incur any benefits directly. I am confident however that this study will allow for a better understanding of the Gay Latino experience in college for university administrators, faculty, staff, and students.

PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY:

Because you will not be providing any information that can uniquely identify you (such as your name or student ID number), the data you provide will be anonymous. Your recorded *testimonio* is necessary to discuss and analyze theory based research. I will store the recordings in a secure and confidential manner and do not intend to use them beyond the scope of this research. The recordings will be destroyed after three years.

COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:

There is no payment or other form of compensation for your participation in this study.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits. Furthermore, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable and may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. In addition, the researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.

OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:

Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you should contact me at 415-341-2289 or lfgarcia@dons.usfca.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE *DATE*

APPENDIX D: Digital *Testimonio*: Voices