EXITOSOS, A PESAR DE TODO: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF ETHNIC AND SCHOLAR IDENTITY FOR HIGH-ACHIEVING HIGH SCHOOL LATINX STUDENTS WHO IDENTIFY AS A BOY IN A SOUTHERN CONTEXT?

Alyssa Jasina Villarreal

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by

Alyssa Jasina Villarreal

A Dissertation
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Major: Instruction and Curriculum Leadership.

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Dedication

The journey of completing this dissertation has been extensive and challenging, but completely worth it. This is dedicated to my inspiration, Antonio Villarreal, my son. You are quite remarkable, mijo. I hope as you chase your dreams, you remember I am always here cheering and supporting you as you have done for me every step of this journey. Your thoughtfulness and understanding along the way has made this possible.

I also dedicate this work to my mom, my first teacher. You have always encouraged me to do my best and work hard to get it done. Your understanding and encouragement have always kept me moving forward toward success.

To my Wheezie, thank you for blazing the path for me and encouraging me through your thoughts, prayers, and encouragement. You have always been a role model for me, planting the seeds that made this a reality long before school was a reality, much less college.

To all my family and friends who have encouraged me with your kinds words of affirmation, helping me to process, finding me when I was lost, and loving me enough to take the time and space (extended thanks to Covid) to see this journey through to the end. I couldn’t have done this without you all!
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As this journey comes to an end, I would like to humbly and graciously thank those individuals that helped make this accomplishment possible for me.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Beverly Cross and Dr. Helena Curtain for seeing something in me worth cultivating through the doctoral process. Dr. Beverly Cross, my chair, has been instrumental in me accomplishing this great task. Her joy, patience, and support throughout this journey have been profound and are greatly appreciated. I also want to thank my committee members: Dr. Helena Curtain and Dr. Juan Carlos Morales. Their support, help, and motivation have been vital in this process.

I would also like to graciously thank a host of colleagues and friends for providing me ample opportunities of encouragement and support. I am blessed to have so many wonderful friends and family who have supported and encouraged me throughout this extensive process.
Abstract


The present study investigated the nature of the ethnic and scholarly identity development in high-achieving, high school students who identify as both Latinx and as a boy. Further the study explored any interactions between the ethnic and scholarly identities of participants. By conducting this study, it is the researcher’s hope that documented the student testimonios contributed to the preparation of teachers, school administrators, and families understandings on what leads to success. Furthermore, the study will contribute to the validity of the importance of identifying and acknowledging the individuality each student brings to the classroom and unique experiences that have contributed to the person present today.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of ethnic and scholarly identity for high-achieving high school Latinx students who identify as a boy in a southern context?

2. How do high-performing high school Latinx students who identify as a boy view the connections between their identities.

The methods for collecting the data included interviews, photo elicitation, and comic development as a form of member-checking. Three themes emerged from the overall data. The three themes that emerged were ethnic identity and scholarly identities can coexist if there is a sense of belonging; parental educational attainment did not hinder participants’ success; and student academic self-concept is critical to academic achievement.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In a country that is known as the land of the free, where free speech is protected by the constitution, why is it that so many are silenced and marginalized? The rapid diversification of America and changing international dynamics have left the power bloc clinging ever more tightly to power and voice. This battle is a national problem that plays out in microcosms across society. The majority of U.S. schools are run by middle-class, well-educated, predominantly white males who broker power and voice in ways that replicate the marginalization of certain groups on the national scale (Williams, 2012). Much of the attention in schools is focused on the lowest quartile and gaps between high performers and low performers. While the composition of high performing and low performing groups has not been described, it is probable that one could accurately guess who is a member of each group (McLaren, 2014). If we can easily populate each group without data, how does that affect the actual members of each group (McLaren, 2014)? What effect does this have on the identity of these youth?

Working in public education for more than 20 years has provided me many opportunities to witness first-hand the inequities in education. Reinforcing these observations were firsthand experiences after I married a Latinx man and changed my last name. The experiences I had in person versus on the phone or in email were very different. In customer service scenarios, the assumption that I did not speak English or the implied annoyance for having to deal with me until they spoke with me provided a stark contrast in treatment. When my son entered formal schooling, he was scheduled to be tested for English as a Second Language services based on his name alone. This experience began my interest in critical race theory years before I could label it. Fast forward 14 years, my son enters high school and for the first time in his life identifies himself as Latinx. Despite the fact our family holds the Latinx culture dear, we celebrate it and share it with him, he never had other Latinx students in his classes with whom he could identify.
His identity as a student had developed to date without a full understanding or appreciation of the richness of his culture. Perhaps this is because of the lack of ethnically similar peers in his advanced coursework and his subsequent categorization as white. My son’s experiences have only reinforced my interest in language and culture and their roles in developing ethnic and scholarly identity.

**Background**

Identity is formed from a variety of personal beliefs and considerations (Stein, 2015). It is also heavily influenced by how others perceive and react to us. For minority boys this influence can be an overwhelmingly negative force that will affect how they identify themselves between their intimate views of self, oppressed by societal norms. Key contributions to forming identity are language and culture (Hall, 2015). The unique manifestation of culture in spoken and written codes sends messages that can be misinterpreted as easily as interpreted. Oral and written codes are one avenue of hegemony in society that is replicated in American schools. The predictable marginalization of groups of people who subscribe to what is defined as nonstandard oral codes feeds the fire of stereotyping and racism (Alim et al., 2016). Shifts in language and changes to codes are endemic to language across generations, cultures, and continents. Modern America, however, is beholden to a whitewashed view of language and culture assigning worth based on the nearness to the dominant majority’s view of correct. In a country founded on the ideals of freedom and opportunity, while being racist in practice to the very core, is a juxtaposition to which many Americans remain blissfully blind (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Using a viewpoint of social justice and a charge to empower minority youth to become change agents draws my professional research intently to the concepts of language and culture and more importantly to their influence on the identity of minority youth. How can we train white and/or middle-class teachers to gain critical consciousness of their own often subconscious beliefs to truly educate all
children regardless of their language and culture providing a more level field of opportunity to
minority students (Valenzuela, 1999)? This study seeks to examine the nature of ethnic and
scholarly identity for high-achieving high school Latinx students who identify as a boy in a
southern context, thereby empowering these students to tell their stories of learning and success
while documenting the process to provide a platform for their voices to be heard.

**Statement of the Problem**

The current tenor of the country and attention being paid to ethnicity and often racism
against groups of people is pervasive. Identification with certain ethnic groups can be
undesirable out of fear of potential retribution. Culture via ethnicity is more under scrutiny than
ever before as evidenced in heightened attention and publication of *anti-immigrant* laws, the
struggles with rapidly diversifying in *new* locales, and changes to how we categorize race and
ethnicity in our country. There are many examples as varied as the experiences of the individuals
who experience them. Diversification is rapidly spreading from industrialized locales, usually
aligned to ports or borders, to new locations and destinations. The diversification of the Midwest
and south now outpaces the rest of the country. These diverse people are entering communities
that may have limited infrastructure to support immigrants and are often unable to provide the
services needed at the same pace of the growth of the community. This diversification is sending
officials scrambling to categorize everyone as accurately as possible. The Pew Research Center
“is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping
the world” (2021, para. 1). Recent studies have centered on changes to the census regarding race
and ethnicity due in part to the rapidly changing demographics and often the lack of
infrastructure to support the growth.

The Pew Research Center (2015) outlined the new ways the U.S. Census Bureau would
ask Americans about their race or origins in the next census. According to their research “one
important indicator is in the growth in interracial marriage: The share of married couples with spouses of different races increased nearly fourfold from 1980 (1.6%) to 2013 (6.3%)” (2015, p. 1). The blending of race in the United States continues to grow. As races join, one could surmise that culture does as well. Through this biological process of mixing races, there are cultural traditions that each person brings to the relationship. These cultural traditions may also be referred to as ethnicity when denoting groups that share language, customs, and beliefs. Due to the growth in blending, the U.S. Census Bureau has decided to reconsider how it tracks race and ethnic identification it should carry through to our classrooms where the effects of such realizations have critical impact on the students we serve. While the U.S. Census Bureau currently attempts to categorize all its citizens into neat boxes of predetermined ethnicity, the Bureau’s research makes it clear that it is not as effective as they would hope. These categories however continue to drive our classification of students and will continue until a better system is devised.

In schools, culturally-relevant pedagogy, an idea developed by Gloria Ladsen-Billings in the 1990s, is quoted by academics and teachers full of good wishes to level the playing field for all students but the actual implementation of these practices appears to be lacking. Implementation of culturally-relevant pedagogy, according to Ladsen-Billings (1995) “must meet three criteria: an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness” (p. 483). Ladsen-Billings, who has continued to research and develop her ideas around culturally-relevant pedagogy and its implementation, challenges the need to recognize the dynamic nature of the pedagogy. Ladsen-Billings (2012) “argues for the importance of dynamic scholarship” and suggests that it is time for a “remix” of her original theory: culturally sustaining pedagogy, as proposed by Paris” (p. 1). A theory must keep up with the rapidly changing
population it serves. Culturally-relevant pedagogy is quoted by many, but its implementation has not solved the issue in part perhaps because as humans live and change so too the theory must evolve. One evolution of culturally-relevant pedagogy is culturally sustaining pedagogy, which seeks to build upon the work of the past while embracing the future.

According to Paris (2012):

The term culturally sustaining requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people—it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence. (p. 95)

Another iteration of culturally-relevant pedagogy comes from Christopher Emdin. Emdin was a student of Ladsen-Billings and has worked directly with her on several studies. One study in particular in which Ladsen-Billings and Emdin collaborated was in the development of hip-hop pedagogy. From hip hop pedagogy, Emdin evolved his theory to reality pedagogy. Emdin purposes while culturally relevant pedagogy had good intentions, it lacked actionable strategies that could yield real change. Reality pedagogy is defined by Taher et al. (2017) as:

…an outgrowth of past research in urban classrooms and focuses primarily on understanding urban students and their culture within a particular social space…Reality pedagogy functions to develop students’ consciousness about the sociopolitical factors that impact the teaching and learning process. (p. 1)

Reality pedagogy requires educators to recognize each student, where they are from, and the culture with which they identify. This information becomes the starting point from which instruction begins (Emdin, 2015). If educators intend to employ reality pedagogy in their classrooms, they must recognize student voice. We must understand that our perception of the
actual student’s experience or identification with a specific culture/ethnicity may differ. What students experience may then be completely different and that is where reality pedagogy is best suited to bridge the gap.

One way in which to begin practicing reality pedagogy is to explore how students identify ethnically. While traditional groups of macro-cultures such as Asian or Latinx drive U.S. categorization, there are micro-cultures within these categories such as Vietnamese, Mexican, or Venezuelan. Acknowledging micro-cultures and the mixing between cultures can provide a much clearer picture of the ethnicity and cultural practices and ultimately how our students identify. To these ends, we need to explore to what degree does a student’s ethnic identity affect academic performance or group membership with other high performers; the extent to which a teen’s ethnic identity shifts based on the group; how teens identify across contexts: at school, at home, on the soccer field or at church; and to what degree social context affects identity. Feasibly each group to which students ascribe contributes to their overarching and potentially complex ethnic identity. In this study I will examine how high-performing Latinx high school students who identify as a boy, living in one of the fastest growing new destinations for Latinx in the South, identify ethnically in a variety of situational contexts to exploring their development of identity.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the ethnic and scholarly identities of high achieving Latinx students who identify as a boy in high school across contexts. In addition, the purpose examines how this identity affects their academic success. By conducting this study, I will provide a space for participant voice and experience, regardless of existing norms for their group, in a way such that teachers, schools, and teacher preparatory institutions can better prepare teachers to engage students and assist them in breaking the norms. This study will
contribute validity to the importance of identifying and acknowledging the individuality students bring to the classroom.

**Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of the ethnic and scholarly identity for high-achieving high school Latinx students who identify as a boy in a southern context?

2. How do high-performing high school Latinx students who identify as a boy view the connections between their identities?

**Conceptual Framework**

The epistemology of this study is based on Constructionism. “Constructionism stems from the concept that meaning is not discovered but constructed or made. Specifically, the world around us holds meanings that are constructed by people, as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (Cook, 2015, p. 8). Jha (2012) asserted that constructionism upholds knowledge that is created by one’s interactions with their own experiences as well as co-created by interaction with others within a certain collective community (Cook, 2017). High performing Latinx high school students who identify as a boy have experiences that shape their ethnic and scholarly identity in a variety of contexts. These influences are also affected by their interaction with others in their daily life. More specifically, social constructionism provides the theoretical framework upon which the research is based. Social constructionism of knowledge acknowledges that people construct meanings of the same phenomenon in different ways (Crotty, 2015). Latinx young men in high school construct their ethnic and scholarly identities differently. Their perceptions and subsequent internalization of events may or may not resemble the perceptions and internalization of a peer in the same situation. Social constructionism accentuates knowledge is framed between participants in a social relationship (Cook, 2017).
Methodology and Methods

The goal of this study is to create space for the voices of Latinx students who identify as a boy in high school to capture and document their perspectives regarding examining their ethnic and scholarly identity in the 21st century and the insights these students can provide on their experience. Emanating from the work of Delgado and Staples (2007) this study aims to affirm and restore cultural pride as necessary. Delgado and Staples stated:

Social identities that are affirming and restore cultural pride wield great influence on how urban youth view themselves, their families, and their communities. A counter-narrative is essential to undo the harm that has been perpetuated by a society that is adultist, sexist, racist ableist and classist. (p. 72)

To these ends, engaging high school Latinx students who identify as boys in the work is essential to bringing their experiences and voices to the forefront. As teens develop in an over-connected world, their perceptions of their ethnic and scholarly development may be very different from those who are significantly older or significantly younger than them. Their involvement at the core of this work will be essential to capturing their true perceptions and subsequent analysis and is the catalyst for the methods used in this study.

Photovoice is a form of participatory action research (PAR) that is relatively new to the qualitative research field but at the same time holds great promise for future work. Photovoice is designed to position participants as both participants and co-researchers (Latz, 2017). As a method, it emanates from the photo novella introduced by Caroline C. Wang and Mary Ann Burris in 1994 (Latz, 2017). The photo novella was first implemented to promote health in a rural Chinese community. While that was the first experience, there are many applications for this method. The name photo novella, however, was too closely related to language and literacy strategies that use photos to tell stories; therefore, Wang and Burris renamed the process
Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997). While the name changed, the goals remained the same. Latz (2017) explained “Photovoice is a methodology that has rich potential for generating new knowledge vis-à-vis counter-stories, stories that diverge from dominant narratives” (p. 5). In considering the usefulness of photovoice with adolescents, Wilson et al. (2007) demonstrated it is an opportunity for adolescents to “actively engage with their social environment through photography, participate in critical analysis, and take action to respond to the issues or assets they identify as important” (p. 259). Traditionally marginalized students can represent their reality through photographs and analysis of those photographs, which assists the students in raising their voice to not only shed light on their reality but also for the community and beyond to experience.

A related goal of photovoice is to make space for counternarratives or testimonios as they are known in LatCrit theory. The photographs allow consumers of the research to “see” what participants are reacting to or from what they are constructing their narratives. Participant reflections on the photos allow the participants’ story and voice to come to the forefront. Camille Sutton-Brown (2015) explained photovoice as follows: “Using ethnographic techniques that combine photography, critical dialogue, and experiential knowledge, participants reflect on and communicate their community's concerns to represent their culture, to expose social problems, and to ignite social change” (p. 169). Another perspective that supports the alignment between Photovoice and testimonio can be drawn from Burke and Greene (2015):

Using counternarratives, we draw upon Critical Race Theory to challenge deficit perspectives of low-income minority youth. This work has benefitted from Freire’s (1970) argument that critical reflection not only leads to discovery and action, but ideally to the social transformation of inequality through counternarratives. (p. 388)
Creating space for high-performing high school students, who identify as boys and as Latinx, to document their ethnic and scholar identities, can shed light on and provide insights into the process through their eyes. At the same time these insights by participants can challenge the master narrative and stereotypes commonly attributed to Latinx boys. Reyes and Rodríguez (2012) explained “the collective goal of testimonio is to name oppression, any type of institutionalized marginalization. It requires active participatory readers or listeners who act on behalf of the speaker in an effort to arrive at justice and redemption” (p. 563).

Teens are using their voices in more public ways to relay their experiences in their own words instead of allowing adults to speak for them. One such example was after the 2018 mass shooting at a school in Parkview, FL. Students united around the country to demand gun reform of adults who are often too ready to speak for students. This event provides an opening to consider the opportunity that a photovoice study provides. Empowering high-performing Latinx boys to share their voice and perspective with the community at-large could promote hope and healing for the participants and insights on how the education community can better serve these students. It is the goal of this program to create a forum for selected members of community to interact and experience these perspectives to drive change in the community at-large.

**Operational Definitions/Technical Terms**

The following terms are relevant to this study and were used throughout this research.

*Latinx*: a gender-neutral term for a person from or with lineage from Latinx or Hispanic backgrounds which allows participants to identify their own gender. The “x” allows for inclusivity in an ordinarily traditional patriarchal lexicon.

*High-achieving*: for the purposes of this study high achieving is defined by students who met the requirements for entrance into one of the district’s magnet programs.
Urban: Urban-ness depends on the configuration and concentration of the following factors: (1) a large, highly-diverse population; (2) decision-making is centralized and invested in bureaucracy that is politically isolated from communities; (3) chronic patterns of underfunding configure decisions about teaching and learning (McLaughlin & Hopfengardner, 1998; Mirel, 1993; Krei, 1998; Wong & Lee, 1998); (4) Schools serve high concentrations of students who are “voluntary minorities” and linguistic minorities (Ogbu, 1995a, 1995b; Seller & Weis, 1998); (5) schools serve high concentrations of students who are “involuntary minorities” whose cultural model of schooling is often different from and in conflict with that of the dominant cultural model (Ogbu, 1995a; Ogbu, 1995b); (6) Urban school systems depend on a unitary, seemingly objective definition of “intelligence” and standardization measures of learning to classify students (Darling-Hammond & Ascher, 1991; Holdzkom, 1999; Sheldon & Biddle, 1998). Size and bureaucracy are the most salient factors. (Weiner, 2000, p. 370)

Identity: “Identity relates to our basic values that dictate the choices we make (e.g., relationships, career). These choices reflect who we are and what we value” (Hashmat, 2014, p. 1).

Ethnic Identity: “Ethnic identity has been defined as the aspect of individuals’ social identity that is derived from membership in their ethnic group and the significance individuals attach to that membership (Phinney, 1992)”. (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009, p. 391)

Scholar Identity: Whiting (2016) outlines the characteristics of students with a scholar identity as exhibiting:

(a) high resilience, (b) high self-confidence, (c) high self-control, (d) a strong sense of self-responsibility, and (e) a clear understanding of the task at hand and the belief that they can accomplish all the subtasks of the intended goal. They are not deterred by
challenges or setbacks because they are optimistic; they even seek out academic challenges, and thrive when educators hold high expectations for them. (p. 224)

Critical race theory: a theory engaged in the study and transformation of the relationship among race, racism, and power. It considers many of the same issues as studied in civil rights and ethnic studies but from a broader perspective including economics, history, setting, group and self-interests, and emotions and the unconscious (Delgado & Stefanić, 2017).

LatCrit theory: is a theory that elucidates Latinxs’ multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression. It is a theory that has a tradition of offering a strong gender analysis so that it “can address the concerns of Latinas in light of both our internal and external relationships in and with the worlds that have marginalized us” (Bernal, 2002, p. 108).

Participatory Action Research:

is a qualitative research methodology. PAR is considered democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing qualitative inquiry that remains distinct from other qualitative methodologies (Kach & Kralik, 2006). Using PAR, qualitative features of an individual’s feelings, views, and patterns are revealed without control or manipulation from the researcher. The participant is active in making informed decisions throughout all aspects of the research process for the primary purpose of imparting social change; a specific action (or actions) is the ultimate goal. (MacDonald, 2012, p. 34).

Limitation of the Study

1. The results that emanate from the study were contextualized and personal, as well as aligned to the specific experiences of the three participants involved; therefore, may not be indicative to all situations involving identity perceptions of high achieving high school Latinx boys. In other words, results are not generalizable.
2. The small sample size of this study does not support generalization.

3. Working with teens to identify and describe their thoughts on their emergent identities are temporal as they themselves are under design.

**Organization of Study**

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the study, provides background on and statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, the conceptual framework, definitions of key terms, limitations of the study, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature. Chapter 3 encompasses a detailed description of the methodology applied in this study including research design, methodology, research settings, participant identification and selection, data collection procedures, methods, data analysis, and confidentiality. Chapter 4 comprises research findings and Chapter 5 includes a summary of findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Roots of Identity: Psychological Perspectives

Aquí Estoy Yo: “Abriéndote Mi Corazón” (Luis Fonsi)

Here I am: “Opening my heart to you”

The study of identity in the field of psychology began with Wilhem Wundt’s work on structuralism in 1879. Over the next century, identity and development of self would be studied and theorized; most notably by Sigmund Freud and later by Erik Erikson. Erikson, holds the title of first child psychoanalyst in the United States. Building on Freud’s theory of psychosexual development he focused on the role social interaction and relationships play the development and growth of human beings. “Erikson also stands apart from most other theorists with his emphasis on the continuation of psychodynamic processes throughout the lifespan” (Kelland, 2017, para. 22). Up to this point, Freud, Vygotsky, Piaget, and Kohlberg all focused on development up to puberty. Erikson expanded this work, adding cross-cultural experiences as evidenced in a study on Sioux Indian children. “It was actually on the basis of cross-cultural comparisons that Erikson felt confident in proposing his eight-stage theory of psychosocial development” (Kelland, 2017, para. 38). To Erikson, identity development was a life-long process. Kelland believed “in adolescence the individual finally has the material around which to form an integrated identity that can remain somewhat stable, hence the psychosocial crisis that arises during that process of integration and more stable identity formation” (para. 53). Erikson summarized his view of identity as a point of intersection. As Freud provided the foundation to Erikson’s work in psychoanalytical identity theory, so has George Mead influenced social psychology.

Mead’s work is said to emanate from Darwinian theory. “The philosophical tradition which Mead sought to advance defined its task as that of clarifying the relation between knowing and being-between epistemology and ontology-between the sentient organism and its
environment (Swanson, 1961, p. 324).” Mead provided the basis of functional psychology which affects both psychologists and sociologists. Functionalism is defined as “a general psychological approach that views mental life and behavior in terms of active adaptation to environmental challenges and opportunities (APA Dictionary of Psychology, para 1). It was found important first for “its sophisticated presentation of a functionalist psychology and second its bold extension of functionalism to explain the covert aspects of acts” (Swanson, 1961, p. 326).

According to Swanson (1961):

functionalism was a psychology well adapted to the requirements of sociologists and social psychologists. It fitted both their data and their theoretical tastes. More than this, it had survived the rigorous test of explaining the same phenomena treated by competing schemes while avoiding their errors. (p. 324)

Functionalism is considered a perennial American psychology and today, is rooted in academic psychology.

Modern interests in social psychology are rooted in James (1890) and McDougall (1908) was another influential presentation of the position. The focus on instinct, however, caused significant push back in the field. Researchers such as Allport (1919) and Faris (1921), Dewey (1922), and Bernard (1924) all criticized the focus on instinct (as cited by Parkovnick, 2015, p. 296).

Allport is particularly of note as he is seen as one of the pioneers of social psychology and its focus on identity. Allport is considered the founder of experimental social psychology because of his emphasis on research. From this genesis point, multiple social psychologists examined specific subtopics that affect individuals’ identity development. Allport’s younger brother Gordon focused on attitudes, prejudice, religion, and rumor transmission, among other topics. Asch focused on studying conformity; Brown studied psycholinguistics via
studies on dying topics such as language acquisition, flashbulb memories, and the tip of the tongue phenomenon. Lewin, known as the father of modern social psychology focused his work on applying his equation, Lewin's Equation: $B = f(P, E)$, which stipulates that behavior is a function of the person and environment, and he advocated "action research". (Social Psychology Network)

Another practitioner of note stemming from this group is Tajfel (1979) who shared his social identity theory defining social identity as a person’s sense of who they are based on their group membership(s) (McLeod, 2008). Individuals and their identity development is affected in part by the people with whom they surround themselves and the groups in which they belong. To these ends, it is important to examine the social effects on the individual. According to Hogg and Ridgeway (2003) “Tajfel drew heavily on sociological constructs to develop his ideas on how societal beliefs about the relationships between groups guide members of particular groups in pursuing a positive sense of distinctiveness for their own group and thus for themselves” (p. 97).

Psychology and psychoanalysis focus on the individual; even social psychology focuses on the individual experiences within the group setting. Sociology however examines phenomenon from the group perspectives. As individuals participating in groups and surrounded by others, it is critical to understand the role groups play on our identity development.

**Roots of Identity: Sociological Perspectives**

*Ahora Soy Diferente: “Nada Dura, Nada Es Para Siempre” (India)*

*Now I’m Different: Nothing lasts, nothing is forever*

Sheldon Stryker is considered a pioneer of sociological identity theory asserting “there is a reciprocal relationship between the self and society” (Stets & Burke, 2005, p. 1). Stets and Burke (2003) explained the self is reflective of society, and the approach sociologists employ to understand the self and its identities create the need to also understand the society “in which the
self is acting, and keep in mind that the self is always acting in a social context in which other selves exist” (p. 1). This is the critical difference between sociological and psychological perspectives. According to Stets and Burke (2005):

Individuals act, but those actions exist within the context of the full set of patterns of action, interaction, and resource transfers among all persons all of which constitute the structure of society. Social structures do emerge from individual actions, as those actions are patterned across individuals and over time, but individual actions also occur in the context of the social structure within which the individuals exist. In this way, social structure is a very abstract idea. (p. 3)

The previous information supports the ubiquity of identity theory and demonstrates the interconnectedness of approaches. As with many theories, Social Identity Theory began as a binary theory: “Self-defined and evaluated in terms of attributes social category (social identity) and self-defined and evaluated in terms of idiosyncratic persona attributes and close personal relationships with specific other people (personal identity)” (Hogg et al., 2017, p. 571).

Since this early binary definition in the early nineties, the definition has become much more textured or varied. In Sociology, some attribute the foundation of identity theory to Meade and Stryker. From their work, many researchers have also delved into subgroups that affect the overarching theory. Hogg and Ridgeway (2003) outline the expansion from Meade’s and Stryker’s identify theories “such as optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991), the social identity theory of leadership (e.g., Hogg and van Knippenberg forthcoming), and the social identity model of deindividuation” (Reicher et al., 1995, p. 98). Hogg and Ridgeway also mention a variety of models including common in-group identity model, ethnolinguistic identity theory, and the theory of social self-regulation among others to further evidence the expansiveness of theories on identity and identity development.
Brewer and Gardner (1996) proposed splitting up self into three categories including: “individual self, based on personal traits that differentiate the self from all others; relational self, based on connections and role relationships with significant others; and collective self, based on group membership that differentiates ‘us’ from ‘them’” (Hogg et al., 2017, p. 571). Part of the goal of further refining the theory is to demonstrate that the idea of identity is not monolithic but rather more compartmentalized and needs to be unpacked. (Hogg et al., 2017). Hogg et al (2017) go on to posit that a person’s social identity can vary in complexity. Swann offers a slightly different unpacking of the self—arguing “that what happens in salient group contexts is that the personal self and associated personal identity becomes “fused” with and undifferentiated from the collective self and associated social identity” (Hogg et al., 2017, p. 572). Another major development in social identity theory includes Prototype-Based Differentiation of self.

Prototype-Based Differentiation focuses “on intragroup structural differentiation—particularly the way that people vary in their actual or perceived match to the group’s prototype” (Hogg et al., 2017, p. 572). Other significant manifestations of social identity research include social identity motivations, intergroup emotions, intergroup conflict and social harmony, collective behavior and social protest, and resolving social dilemmas. The specializations in the social identity theory continue to expand as researchers seek to home in on specific manifestations or deviations of identity based on social group norms. Another field of exploration of identity is found in anthropology.

**Roots of Identity: Classification and Identity**

**Represent Cuba: “La Historia De Mis Raíces” (Orishas)**

**Represent Cuba: “The history of my roots”**

Classification began as a scientific process; however, it “provided the foundation for the colonization of Native land, the enslavement of American Indians and Africans, and a common
identity among socially unequal and ethnically diverse Europeans” (Harvey, 2016, p. 1). Conversely “‘race’ originally denoted a lineage, such as a noble family or a domesticated breed, and concerns over purity of blood persisted in 18th-century” (Harvey, 2016, p. 1). Yudell (2011) explained “in the ancient world no concept truly equivalent to that of ‘race’ can be detected in the thought of the Greeks, Romans, and early Christians” (p. 2). While Jefferson asserted that all men are created equal in the Declaration of Independence, 200+ years later America has not reconciled this Jeffersonian ideal with the reality of experience. In 1749, French naturalist Louis LeClerc, Comte de Buffon, introduced the concept of race into the sciences (Yudell, 2011). Carolus Linnaeus also made lasting contributions to the race concept. Linnaeus’s “natural system,” which became the basis for the classification of all species, “divided humanity into four groups: Americanus, Asiaticus, Africanus, and Europeaeus” (Yudell, 2011, p. 2). This set the stage for genetics and the eugenics movement to provide the formative language of racism.

Official classification defined groups, determines boundaries between them, and assigns individuals to groups; in “ranked ethnic systems” (Horowitz, 2000), this process enshrines structurally the dominant group’s belief about who belongs where, which groups deserve what, and ultimately who gets what. (Hochschild, 2007, p. 157)

While race was fiercely debated in Colonial America “race acquired legal power and social significance in the U.S. early republic in the decades before the Civil War” (Harvey, 2016, p. 9). This classification system, outlined in the Declaration of Independence, planted seeds from which inequity would thrive for centuries to come.

The United States formed with a racial classification scheme and while the classifications themselves may have changed the racial hierarchy itself is still based on the 18th century model (Prewitt, 2013). By Prewitt’s (2013) measure “twenty-first century statistics should not be governed by race thinking that is two and a half centuries out of date” (p. 3). Prewitt (2013) also
goes on to explain that America’s statistical races are no accident. They have been “deliberately constructed and reconstructed by the government” (p. 4). According to the U.S. Census there are five races and two ethnicities that are tracked. The five races include white, black, American Indian, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and the ethnicities include Hispanic. What is pertinent to Latinxs is group labeled “Hispanic” did not appear in a US census until 1930 and it was the first racial category created for non-Asians since 1850. It was also the first racial category that could apply to white people positioning them in a permanent subordinate status (Prewitt, 2015). It was present for the 1930 census and due to protests it was dropped for the following census. Mexicans demanded their own category by 1970, the Hispanic origin was created except that it was defined by language and ethnicity instead of race. In the 2000 census, more than half of the Mexicans and Central Americans selected “some other race” line and Hispanic was the only ethnicity choice. By 2010, 97% of Hispanics selected the “some other race” category and Latino appeared in addition to Hispanic for ethnicity. The Pew Hispanic Center reports that “the majority of Hispanics prefer to self-identify by their family’s country of origin rather than the umbrella census classification of Hispanic” (Prewitt, 2015, p. 188). In 2010, Latino appeared in the census, perhaps providing a nod to the painful domination of many Latin American countries by Spain. In 2010, 97% of Hispanics selected “some other race” category and Latino appeared in addition to Hispanic for ethnicity.

The word "Latino" is sometimes invoked to help name a subjectivity formed via an uneven history of displacement and dispossession. From this perspective, Chicano identification finds an affinity with Latinidad. Ethnic identification plays into the ways Latinos engage with regimes of power, an engagement overwritten with racialized and/or nationalist identities. (Pérez-Torres, 2000, p. 538)
Mario Garcia (2014) extends the view of Latino to include an essence of living or evolution for new generations. This new generation whose “experiences are attempting to relate to a more pan-Latino identity. The term Latino for them is not just a strategic one but one relating to a new social, cultural, and political experience” (Garcia, 2014, p. 6). This new generation aligns to the epic growth of Latinos in the United States. The term Latino/a has expanded in more recent years to include Latinx: a gender-neutral terminology designed to be inclusive of all individuals due to the paternalistic linguistic code.

In their report Multiracial in America (2015), the Pew Research Center outlined the new ways the U.S. Census Bureau will ask Americans about their race or origins in the next census. According to the Pew Center (2015) “one important indicator is in the growth in interracial marriage: The share of married couples with spouses of different races increased nearly fourfold from 1980 (1.6%) to 2013 (6.3%)” (p. 1). The blending of race in the United States continues to grow, and as they do, one could surmise that culture does as well. Through this biological process of mixing race, there are cultural traditions that each person brings to the relationship. These cultural traditions can also be referred to as ethnicity when denoting groups that share language, customs, and beliefs. This growth in blending that is leading the U.S. Census Bureau to reconsider how it tracks race and ethnic identification should carry through to our classrooms where the effects of such realizations have critical impact on the students we serve. While the U.S. Census Bureau currently attempts to categorize all its citizens into neat boxes of predetermined ethnicity, their research makes it clear that it is not as effective as they would hope. These categories however continue to drive our classification of students and will continue until a better system is devised.
Oppression in the 21st Century

Framing Ethnic Identity

La Gozadera: “Gente De Zona”

La Gozadera: People of the area

The research on ethnic identity including Latinx boys, explores ethnic identity in relation to self-esteem and academic performance. Toomey and Umaña-Taylor (2012) explained:

because ethnic identity has been identified as an indicator of positive youth development among minority youth, and because it has been linked with youths’ self-esteem…

therefore, a stronger sense of self (ethnic identity resolution) should be related to greater positive feelings about the self. (p. 9)

They also cited Jean Phinney, an early researcher of ethnic identity, who explains “ethnic identity pertains to how individuals interpret and understand their ethnicity and the degree to which they have a sense of attachment to their ethnic group” (Toomey & Umaña-Taylor, 2012, p. 9). Belonging is an often elusive feeling most students desperately seek throughout adolescence.

Jean Phinney’s work sought to examine ethnic identity according to “the aspects of ethnicity that are applicable to all groups” (Phinney, 1992, p. 158). She introduced a scale called the multigroup ethnic identity scale in 1992 to examine these commonalities and how they compare across groups. Phinney’s (1992) work stems from Henri Tajfel’s definition of ethnic identity. Tajfel held that:

ethnic identity is an aspect of a person’s social identity that has been defined as that part of an individual’s self-concept that derives from his or her knowledge of membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that significance. (p. 156)
In developing this measure, she seeks to compare across groups which, with existing scales, was not possible at this point. Current scales examined the manifestation of ethnic identity from the perspective of a specific group preventing the comparisons across groups. Phinney piloted this measure with 196 students from four groups (Asian American, Black, Mexican American and Whites) in California. The measure asks students to rank their perception on a Likert scale to identify to what degree they agree or disagree with the provided statement. Then she asks students to identify as one of seven pre-defined ethnic groups.

Defining ethnic groups, without the individualizing characteristics of that group, sterilizes the comparison losing part of the richness with which members of the group may identify. Without the individualizing characteristics, or micro-culture, we are left with stereotypical views of macro-culture monoliths. These monoliths fail to represent the diversity within the group and leave individuals estranged from the macro-culture descriptor. Failing to define micro-cultural identifiers, the macro-cultural groups, such as those defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, pose problems. Identifying with certain groups may have negative consequences that inhibit honest identification for fear of negative effects with identification of certain groups. In 2009, Adriana Umaña-Taylor, Ani Yazedjian and Mayra Bámaca-Gómez developed an ethnic identity scale to examine “individuals’ degree of exploration and resolution regarding ethnicity as high or low” (2009, p. 13). This scale is known as the Ethnic Identity Scale.

The Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS) measures three components of ethnic identity: “(a) the degree to which individuals have explored their ethnicity, (b) the degree to which they have resolved what their ethnic identity means to them, and (c) the affect (positive or negative) that they associate with that resolution” (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009, p. 14). The EIS focuses on the students self-identifying their ethnic group in which they participate.
Beyond providing evidence for the reliability and validity of the measure, our findings also highlight the importance of examining the three components of ethnic identity as individual factors … this investigation allows the method of assessing ethnic identity to become congruent with both Erikson’s and Tajfel’s theoretical frameworks (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009, p 34).

Through the shift in this study, allowing student voice for self-identification of ethnic identity, the authors focused on university students in large cities many of which were found in traditional Latino destinations. The authors identified that it will be “important for future studies to employ qualitative methods to better understand the nature of the classifications of the ethnic identity” (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009, p. 35). Allowing high school students to explore their personal manifestations of ethnic identity in nontraditional Latinx destinations will be critical in providing students voice.

**Breaking the Binary**

*Piel Canela: “El Canela De Tu Piel Se Quede Igual”*

*Cinnamon Skin: “The cinnamon of your skin stays the same”*

Often, racial identity and ethnic identity are used synonymously when in fact they are not. According to Schwartz, Jarvis, and Zamboanga (2007) ethnic identity refers to “a subjective experience of heritage culture retention with a specific heritage and set of values, beliefs, and customs as a referent while racial identity uses a particular skin tone as a referent” (p. 364). Aranda and Rebollo-Gil (2004) explained that Latinxs are a “multiracial, multiethnic group, rendering it difficult to classify them (p. 912). This may be one reason why the U.S. census only records Hispanics or Latinxs as an ethnic group however Latinxs’ don’t seem to see themselves fitting into U.S. categories.

Latinos see race as a fluid concept involving culture and context (Rodriguez, 2000). Racially, they might identify as Black, brown, mulatto, criollo, trigueño, mestizo, or White.
However, their nonracial status in the eyes of the U.S. government reifies the illusion that they are not racialized as social groups; their “race” is subsumed under white or Black. But the “Latino race” is real in its consequences – their social position is “almost equivalent to that of one of the major racial categories” (Hirschman et al., 2000, p. 382 as cited by Aranda & Rebollo-Gil, 2004, p. 913). This binary racial continuum privileges Whiteness over Blackness and ensures others remain subordinated. Aranda and Rebollo-Gil (2004) go on to posit that ethnicity has been racialized stating:

Race in the 20th – century America is not limited to phenotype; the social construction of race involves ethnic and global dimensions such as national origin, culture, language, religion, the historical relationship between colonial powers and their political subjects, and race. (p. 913)

Taylor et al. (2012) found that about 7 in 10 (69%) Latinos believe that Latinos have many different cultures rather than a “common culture” (p. 2). Meanwhile, they found that one quarter (24%) of Hispanics primarily use a pan-ethnic label (Hispanic or Latino) to identify themselves, while about half (51%) primarily use their countries of origin to identify themselves (Taylor et al., 2012, p. 2). Likewise, Zarate et al. (2005) found that the majority (85%) of Latino youth in their longitudinal study selected multiple labels to identify themselves, and that culture, race, language, and nationality all played a role in their construction of ethnic identity. Sonya Tafoya (2004) offered additional insight into how Latinos categorize themselves. In the 2004 Pew Hispanic Center Report Tafoya explains the country of origin effects racial identification, stating “Among U.S.-born Latinos whiteness is clearly and consistently associated with higher social status, higher levels of civic participation and a stronger sense of acceptance” (p. 1). Younger Hispanics are more likely to identify as some other race (median age 24) while slightly older Hispanics identify as white (median age of 27) (Tafoya, 2004). “97% of the 2000 US
Census takers who marked some other race were Latino” (Nicholson, Pantoja, & Segura, 2005, p. 3). Also, of interest, when asked to choose between “American,” “Hispanic or Latino,” and location of origin such as “Mexican,” “far more native-born Latinos who say they are white (55 percent) pick ‘American’ compared to those who say they are some other race (36 percent)” (Tarfoya, 2004, p. 2). Nicholson et al. contends “a large percentage of Latin Americans identify as white or employ terms like moreno, mulato, mestizo, trigueño, indio, and so forth, as a way of distancing themselves from the category negro” (p. 5). Thus, the U.S. racial dichotomy manifests as a continuum in Latin America because of these “unique racial categories and the addition of substantial indigenous populations to the mix (Andrews, 2004; Wade 1997)” (Nicholson et al., 2005, p. 5). For example, in the 2000 U.S. Census, 80.5% of Puerto Ricans living on the island identifies as White, while only 46.4% of Puerto Ricans living on the mainland identify as White (Nicholson et al., 2005).

A large reason for the different perspective regarding race with Latinxs is largely due to the mixing of races in their countries of origin. “Among U.S.-born Latinos whiteness is clearly and consistently associated with higher social status, higher levels of civic participation and a stronger sense of acceptance” (Tafoya, 2004, p. 1). So, what does this mean for all Latinxs who identify as something other than white? Morenos, mulatos, mestizos, trigueños, indios are all terms used to describe the continuum of identities between the poles of white and black (Tarfoya, 2004). One group that is largely comprised of the afore mentioned groups are AfroLatinxs who to some, are a conundrum. Traditionally, we conceive of Latinxs;’ as either Latin or Black which “denies the experience of those who identify themselves or whose experiences mark them as both Black and Latino/a, and who do not fit comfortably into either category” (Latorre, 2012, p. 1).
A Pew Research Center survey of Latino adults shows that 25% of all U.S. Latinos self-identify as Afro-Latino, Afro-Caribbean or of African descent with roots in Latin America (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2016, p. 1). Those who identify as Afro-Latino are more concentrated on the East Coast and South, more likely foreign born, and less likely to have a college education thus making less income than many in America (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2016). According to Pew Hispanic Center, when asked directly “higher shares of Afro-Latinos identified as white alone or white in combination with another race (39%) or volunteered that their race or one of their races was Hispanic (24%). Only 9% identified as mixed race” (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2016, p. 2). This maybe because in the “Latin America’s colonial period, about 15 times as many African slaves were taken to Spanish and Portuguese colonies than to the U.S.” (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2016, p. 3). Afro-Latinos make up significant shares of the population in some corners of Latin America: in Mexico, 1.2% of the population identify as Afro-Mexican; Black Cubans are 33% of the population in Cuba, in the Dominican Republic the estimates could be as high as 90% of the population (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2016, p. 3). “To a considerable degree, the challenges and conditions facing Latinos, Afro-Latinos and African-Americans tend to overlap” (Rochin, 2016, p. 11).

African Americans and Latinos are more likely to attend high-poverty schools than Asian Americans and Caucasians. And along with schools of considerable poverty come high drop-out rates and other socioeconomic realities that may deprive students of valuable resources, rigorous curriculums and teachers who may expect less of them academically than they expect of similarly situated Caucasian students (American Psychological Association, 2015 as cited by Rochin, 2016, p. 12)
These are only a few examples of the dissonance between the US racial system and the identification of Hispanics within this system leaving Latinxs as permanently relegated to “other status”.  

The Effect of Status on Ethnic Identity

*Mi Tierra: “La tierra donde naciste no la puedes olvidar, porque tiene tus raíces”*

*My Land: You cannot forget the land where you were born because it has your roots.*

In the United States, 5.3 million children and adolescents are growing up either with unauthorized status or with at least one parent who has that status (Yoshikawa et al., 2016, p. 4). The manifestations of their unauthorized status profoundly effects their ethnic, racial, and scholarly identity development and ultimately their future success. It is important to understand that “legal statuses among immigrants to the United States fall into four major categories: permanent, temporary, discretionary, and unauthorized” (Waters & Pineau, 2015 as cited by Yoshikawa et al., 2016, p.). U.S. immigration laws over the previous thirty years have “left more individuals living with unauthorized status for longer periods of time (currently a median of 13 years) than at any other time in U.S. history” (Passel, Cohn, Krogstad, & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2014 as cited by Yoshikawa et al., 2016, p. 5). While we may think these numbers are mostly adults, that couldn’t be farther from the truth. According to Yoshikawa et al. (2016) “28% of the 18.7 million first- and second-generation children and youth in the United States (Child Trends, 2013) are growing up directly affected by unauthorized status—either by being unauthorized themselves or by living in a household with an unauthorized parent (p. 5). The largest ethnic group represented within this estimate are those of Mexican origin (Yoshikawa et al., 2016). While immigrant status has been widely studied those studies focused on adolescents are fewer in number.
The developmental process can be complicated by experiences of intense acculturative and intergenerational conflicts as the strive to adapt in social identity contexts that may be racially and culturally dissonant…How these adolescents think and feel about themselves is critically affected by their parents’ mode of ethnic socialization and by the strength of the attachment that child feels to the parent and the parents’ national origins. (Rumbaut, 1994, p. 753).

Another important consideration that contributes to the child’s identity is their gender.

Adolescent Latinx boys tend to enjoy more freedom and autonomy than Latinx girls. Latinx immigrant boys were found to be more likely to choose an unhyphenated national identity – whether American or national origin (Yoshikawa et al., 2016, p. 788). “High school completion among Latinos is related to girls experiencing closer parental supervision and monitoring, more supportive peer and teacher relationships, and a more fluid identity formation that might facilitate a protective bicultural identity compared to boys (Qin, 2006)” (Diaz-Strong & Ybarra, 2016, p. 5). Youth in urban school environments where minorities are the minority are more likely to define themselves by those identities (Black/Chicano) than by ancestral national origin (Yoshikawa et al., 2016). “Nearly all of the recent deportees have been Latino men, placing disproportional stress on Latino families and communities” (Golash-Boza & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013 as cited by Yoshikawa et al., 2016, p. 5) – especially Latinx boys who suddenly become the man of the family. Manifestations of the anxiety and stress carried by unauthorized immigrant adolescents or adolescents with unauthorized family member permeates their life experiences and especially their future success in schools and life.

Diaz-Strong and Ybarra (2016) explain many of the challenges unauthorized adolescents experience connected to school and success. They cited:
children in two parent homes, in general, perform better academically compared to children in single-mother homes (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010; Thomson, Hanson, & McLanahan, 1994); it has been found to increase the likelihood of having a high GPA (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010) and decrease the probability of dropping out of high school (Glick & White, 2003). Parental educational attainment has consistently been found to predict educational outcomes for all children including childhood arrivals and native-born Latinos. (Diaz-Strong & Ybarra, 2016, p. 284)

Considering the largest number of deportations are Latinx men, this highlights the deficit Latinx boys face in school. Two parent homes have also been linked to higher GPAs and decreased probability of dropping out (Diaz-Strong & Ybarra, 2016, p. 284). “Parental educational attainment has consistently been found to predict educational outcomes for all children including childhood arrivals and native-born Latinos” (Diaz-Strong & Ybarra, 2016, p. 284). Yoshikawa et al. (2016) support this position in their work stating:

unauthorized status is linked to lower levels of education and higher rates of poverty in the short term and across generations (Bean, Brown, & Bachmeier, 2015). Abrego (2006) and Gonzales (2011) cite Bernhardt et al., 2009 and Hall et al., 2010, who found lower levels of educational progress and engagement among unauthorized, relative to authorized, young adults of Latino origin and links have been established between unauthorized status and lower wages and worse work conditions among young adult workers, even when adjusting for a host of background factors. (p. 5)

With little hope of accessing post-secondary learning opportunities, educational aspirations of Latinxs remain low and the risk for dropping out remains high. Anxiety and depression are also high in unauthorized adolescents and adolescents with family members who are unauthorized alike. While there are direct correlations for students who are unauthorized,
negative results for children with parents or family members of unauthorized status are also at risk (Yoshikawa et al., 2016, p. 5). “Having a parent who is unauthorized is associated with a number of developmental and educational vulnerabilities in U.S.-born children and youth, including lower levels of cognitive development, achievement, and educational progress across early and middle child-hood (Brabeck, Sibley, Taubin, & Murcia, 2015; Ortega et al., 2009; Yoshikawa, 2011)” (Yoshikawa et al., 2016, p. 5). The variety of oppressive symptoms and experiences of unauthorized adolescents are heightened through daily experiences of a variety of mechanisms that promote oppression in the U.S.

**Evidencing Oppression in the 21st Century**

**Roots of Inequity**

*Si El Norte Fuera El Sur: “Las Barras Y Las Estrellas Se Adueñan De Mi Bandera” (Ricardo Arjona)*

*If The North Was the South: “The stars and stripes dominate my flag”*

The beginning of American history is also the beginning of racial inequity for many in this country. The wild, wild west, with its alluring rich lands oozing with potential power, was irresistible to the “new” settlers. Emboldened by manifest destiny, the White settlers took every opportunity to secure their dominance. They added 525,000 square miles to the United States territory, which included the land that makes up all or parts of present-day Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming (History.com, para. 6). Many believed that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, facilitating this expansion, was a mutually beneficial business agreement. It was quite the opposite. The U.S. shut down all Mexican ports locking down their business opportunity and ability to care for their citizens (Underwood, 2008). The treaty was not a sale agreement but rather un secuestro (a kidnapping for ransom). The only way for Mexicans to stop the aggression of a stronger invader and “to recover” at least part of the
invaded territories (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, p. 40) was to cede the land demanded. In this forced cession of land, Mexican residents were given the ultimatum to return to Mexico or declare as permanent resident aliens in the United States (Razo-Gomez, p. 8). Manifest destiny marks the beginning of American cultural imperialism established through the domination of native peoples. Not only were their lands and resources stolen, but with them their power and agency were taken, all while falsely promising the natives a better, more civilized way of life. These false promises of equity, stemming from the forced cession of half of Mexico’s territory, gave rise to the social and educational oppression that Latinxs in the United States still live today.

The struggle of Mexican Latinxs in education began in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. Valenzuela (1999) pointed out “schools have played a significant role in the inculcation of dominant values, keeping Mexican students subordinated via the cultural relationships and belief systems indoctrinated through curriculum” (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2012, p. 71). The U.S. patriarchy leverages its educational pipeline to indoctrinate students in Eurocentric mindsets and cultural expectations. Castro-Salazar and Bagley (2012), concurred with Valenzuela, and contended “schools are a powerful instrument of indoctrination and through this medium, Mexican culture and language have been systemically minimized through laws, educational policies and practices” (p. 71). This is evidenced by the overnight shift students experienced after the Treaty of Guadalupe. Students were banned from speaking their native language, connecting with their culture and tradition, and deprived from learning about their history since it was not perceived as valuable to the educational learning of an "American" citizen (Razo-Gomez, 2016, p. 9). After the treaty, education was haphazard at best for Latinx students. This continued and tensions mounted as the country was part of two world wars. “For Hispanics, the two world wars and the economic restructuring of the U.S. economy led to three
phenomena that shaped their educational experiences: urbanization, immigration, and the emergence of Hispanic leadership in the fight for civil rights” (Verdugo, 2006, p. 15). As soldiers returned to the U.S., they refused to continue to accept the humiliations at home. This fueled the Latinx civil rights battle landing a landmark case in 1945. “Mendez v. Westminster involved Hispanic parents seeking entrance for their child into an all-white public school, and it paved the way for the Supreme Court’s historic Brown v. Board decision in 1954” (Verdugo, 2006, p. 16). Subsequently, the de-industrialization of the U.S. left many Latinx’s looking for work or shifting jobs to support new industry, moving to find unskilled jobs that had not been outsourced or automated by new technology (Verdugo, 2006).

As the 1960s ended, Mexican origin students and teachers had become more organized, politicized, and vocal regarding the educational injustices thrust upon them. 1965 brought about Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary act funding bilingual education. While some thought this was a step toward equality, many more believed it helped those in power more (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2012). The East L.A. school blowouts were an epic demonstration by almost ten thousand students protesting the inferior quality of their education (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2012). The 1970s brought Lau vs. Nichols “a landmark case establishing that failure to provide non-English speaking Chinese students a comprehensive education denied them equal educational opportunities” (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2012, p. 76). The 80s marked a shift in spending to a more conservative agenda, shifting funds to the military and reducing educational reforms, many of which reversed bilingual programs and ushered in English-only education (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2012). California passed Proposition 187, denying undocumented workers education or health care in the 90s. Anti-immigrant racism builds during the 80s and 90s leading in a new century already wrought with anti-immigrant racism positioning Mexican-origin people as outsiders, regardless of their origin or history in the country (Castro-Salazar &
Bagley, 2012). Fast forward to 2018, we elected a president intent on building a wall between the U.S. and Mexico; witnessed hundreds of children separated from families at the Texas border and asylum seekers tear-gassed at the San Ysidro crossing.

Perceived racial differences construct false perceptions of People of Color as “nonnative,” and not belonging to the monolithic “American” identity—an identity that has historically been tied to perceptions and constructions of whiteness (Roberts 1997; Saito 1997; Johnson 1997; Sánchez 1997; Acuña 2000; Ngai 2004; De Genova 2005; Pérez Huber et al. 2008). These perceptions justify racism, discrimination, and violence committed against various groups of people throughout history. (Huber, 2011, p. 382)

Through this “othering” process, minorities are diminished and silenced. Their skills minimized, forcing them to either assimilate to the dominant culture or perish. More than a century of lived and legislated oppression, constructed by false promises of equity, underscore the current educational injustices Latinx students endure today. Mexicans remain the largest group of Latinxs in the U.S. but not the only.

While many may attribute the beginnings to the Treaty of Guadalupe and the Mexican American War of 1848, it was amplified by another war fifty years later, The Spanish-American War of 1898. The U.S. acquired Puerto Rico as a result and established a colonial relationship with the island (Caramillo & Bonillo, 2001).

Puerto Ricans were not accorded the status of U.S. citizenship, however, until 1917, just in time to make them eligible for military service in World War I. In 1947, Puerto Rico was accorded commonwealth status, a development that did not appreciably change the status of the island and its people as possessions of the United States. Numerous factors—interdependency, U.S. domination of the island’s economy, unemployment, poverty, and lack of opportunity, combined with cheap transportation costs to the United
States—resulted in Puerto Ricans migrating to the U.S. mainland; and the movement gained momentum in the decades after World War II. (Caramillo & Bonillo, 2001, p. 105)

Puerto Ricans are largely left out of the research or included only when discussing under achievement. The island has a population of 3.4 million people as well as a “vibrant culture shaped by a mix of Spanish, United States and Afro-Caribbean influences” (History.com editors, 2007, p.1). Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States however, the island’s status in relation to the United States is ambiguous. There is a heated debate over the years “between those who support its commonwealth status, those who favor full-fledged Puerto Rican statehood and those who want to be their own independent nation” (History.com editors, 2007, p.1). Between 1950 and 1970 “more than 500,000 people (some 25 percent of the island’s total population) left Puerto Rico, an exodus known as La Gran Migración (the Great Migration)” (History.com editors, 2007, p. 1) and now have large vibrant communities in mainland US cities including Chicago, Philadelphia, Miami and especially New York City.

Over the last three decades, numerous scholars have written about the connection between the academic underachievement of Puerto Rican colonial subjects educated in the United States and socioeconomic/academic barriers, such as internal and direct colonialism, single-parent households, poverty, culturally irrelevant curricula, and the nonacademic tracking these students face within traditional public urban schools on a continual basis (Nieto, 1998, 2000; Pérez, 1973; Spring, 1994). (Garrett et al., 2007, p. 107)

Recently several scholars have produced research that looks at factors that could stimulate high academic achievement of Latino/Puerto Rican students (Garrett et al., 2007). “These factors include the importance of these students’ families as support systems; students’ acquisition of
social capital and their participation in social networks; and the importance of caring teachers and culturally relevant curricula within schools” (Garrett et al., 2007, p. 107). The high-achieving Puerto Rican students who can be classified as having a school kid identity, according to Flores-Gonzalez (2002) “are more likely to be sheltered in safe social niches with other school kids and encouraged by school staff to actively participate in extracurricular activities like athletic teams, church-related activities, and academic-based school clubs” (Garrett et al., 2007, p. 107). The stories of success also however need to be highlighted and learned from to potentially help others in the future.

A third major immigrant group also stems from the Spanish American War of 1898 but has a different manner of incorporation when compared to Puerto Rico. Thus, Cuban’s experiences were vastly different from Puerto Ricans. A few years after military occupation of the island in 1898, the United States turned over control to the Cubans. Though a small Cuban immigrant community had developed in Florida, especially in Miami, mass migration did not occur until after Castro’s socialist revolution in 1959 (Portes and Bach, 1985). Successive migrations followed. (Caramillo & Bonillo, 2001, p. 106)

Alex Stepick (2011) explained by 1980 Miami had the “highest proportion of foreign-born residents of any US metropolitan area, proportionally 50% more than LA or New York” (p. 129). Stepick (2011) went on to explain that more important than the number of Cubans in Miami is “who and where the Latins are and what they are doing” (p. 129).

While Miami has only 5% of the total US Latin population, it has close to half of the forty-largest Latin-owned industrial and commercial firms in the country. There are twenty-five thousand Latin-owned businesses in Dade County. Its mayor, city manager, county manager and one of its representatives all are foreign-born Latins. Elites from
Cuban immigrants in the early sixties were predominantly the upper class who were most affected by Castro’s revolution. Later in the sixties came professionals and urban middle class. It wasn’t until the eighties that Cubans from more humble backgrounds began to come to Miami (Stepick, 2011). The flow however has been mostly one way with the “upper middle class disproportionately represented” (Stepick, 2011, p. 131).

41% of Cubans in the U.S. have more than 12 years of education, and only 4% have fewer than nine years of education. The 2010 U.S. Census corroborates this “indicating that 20.8 per cent of the Cuban population in the US have studied between 9 and 12 years and 30.2 per cent have received 13 or more years of education (US Census Bureau 2010 as cited by Valdés & Sainz, 2014, p. 42). The resources available to the middle- and upper-class Cuban immigrants provide greater access to education and opportunity. “Cubans are generally regarded as among the more “successful” immigrant groups, with higher average earnings and faster wage growth rates than other groups of Hispanic immigrants (Borjas 1982; Portes and Grosfoguel 1994)” (Zadney, 2003, p. 1). Financial success opens doors and presents opportunities; however, there are still persons who get left behind and that is often linked to skin color. “Racial differences in earnings among Cuban immigrants suggest a complicated story. Average incomes among black Cuban immigrants were almost 40 percent less than among their white counterparts in 1990 (Garcia 1996)” (Zadney, 2003, p. 1). History repeats itself and this instance is no different. Opportunity favors skin color and money especially with immigrants.

**Academic Inequities**

*Bandera: “¿Quién decide quién tiene el poder?” (Aterciopelados)*

*Flag: Who decides who has the power?*
The United States of America is founded on the idea of educational equality. A major part of our national heritage is our collective commitment to the notion that all men - and women- are ‘created equal and entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’ Furthermore, according to the 14th amendment, all are entitled to equal protection under the law. (Darling-Hammond, 2015, p. 28)

Latinxs represent the largest minority group in the U.S. and their elusive academic success keeps the White majority in power. According to a Pew Hispanic Center report, the U.S. Latinx population increased from 13% to 16% of the total U.S. population in the years 2000-2010. In 2010, Latinx citizens equaled over 50.5 million (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Data on this growth indicate an important phenomenon: Latinx populations are moving into new areas of the U.S. with five states exhibiting the largest growth rates: North Carolina (575%), Arkansas (508%), Georgia (449%), Tennessee (410%) and Nevada (328%) (Verdugo, 2006, p. 3).

Research indicated the big draw is the availability of jobs that do not require much skill and these jobs are being filled, mainly, by Latinx immigrants (Verdugo, 2006, p. 4). "The education challenge among Hispanics is especially pronounced in these rapidly growing metropolitan areas, where the education deficit is largest” (Frey, 2015, p. 75). While some attribute the overall number of Latinxs to immigration (illegals coming into this country and overtaxing the system), Frey (2018) clarified “it is important to understand that the most recent population growth is due to natural growth (the number of births minus deaths) rather than immigration” (p. 66). Latinxs in new destinations, are more likely to be "foreign born, less proficient in English, less educated and poorer than the Latinx population as a whole” (Frey, 2017, p. 76). However, the Latinx population in new destinations represents only 7.4% of all Latinxs in the U.S. (Frey, 2017). In U.S. classrooms, 20% of school-aged children identified as
Latinx in 2008 and it is estimated that “one in four of all public-school students” will be Latinx students by 2025 (Gándara, 2010, p. 1).

Nationwide, 80% of Latinos attend schools where the majority of students are from the same racial background (Orfield et al., 2012). Furthermore, more often than not, America’s poorest children of color are concentrated together, typically in under-resourced schools that struggle to meet students’ academic and social needs (Orfield and Lee, 2006). (Noguera et al., 2015, p. 4)

These add up to staggering numbers of Latinx children in our country who are being chronically underserved. This lack of service is more than just being left behind academically, it is rather an indicator of a larger system of oppression - an opportunity gap. “Compounded inequalities in resources, reinforced over generations, have created what Gloria Ladsen-Billings has called an ‘educational debt’ owed to those who have been denied access to quality education for hundreds of years” (Darling-Hammond, 2015, p. 29). As Latinxs move to new destinations around the United States, and show no signs of slowing down, students in these new destinations experience the opportunity gap more profoundly because new destinations are less prepared to resolve the needs of Latinx students, especially immigrants (Frey, 2018). Therefore, the oppression continues, and the opportunity gap widens ensuring more Latinx students are left behind or rather kept in their place.

Academic achievement, for those who stay, in school varies among different Latinx groups. Latinxs in general have much lower academic achievement than do members of other ethnic groups leading to Latinx students dropping out before graduation. Latinx students evidence the highest drop-out rates for all racial and ethnic groups (Pew Hispanic Center, 2004). Only 53.2% of Latinxs graduate (Orfield et al., 2004) leaving the average number of years of schooling for Latinx boys 10.6 years, almost three years fewer than their white counterparts (Pew
By 2015 the county has seen some decline in drop-outs according to *The Condition of Education 2015* by the U.S. Department of Education. *The Condition of Education 2015* demonstrates that the Latinxs still maintain the highest dropout rate of all ethnic groups. The report goes on to specify the dropout rate is highest for non-U.S. born Latinx students (Kena et al., 2015). For those who stay in school, the picture is not very different.

In many districts, and especially in the local district, Latinx students are underrepresented in advanced academics, such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses. For those who do enroll in AP courses, Latinxs have the lowest average scores on AP exams (Miller, 2005). Latinx students also perform lower on the ACT and SAT than their white counterparts (College Board, 2007). Clark et al. (2013) corroborated Madrid’s perspective (2011) citing Latinx students are more likely to be enrolled in overcrowded schools; learn from undertrained, under credentialed teachers; and experience minimal educational support staff to address their specific learning styles (Oakes, 2005; Valencia, 2011; Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). Clark et al. (2013) go on to point out that high teacher turnover rate and the lack of bilingual teachers leave these Latinx students to face “daunting challenges” in finding and accessing the necessary supports and motivation to persist through the challenges and lead to academic achievement (p. 459). Overwhelming evidence supporting Ladsen-Billing’s theory of educational debt continuing to serve the white majority and leaving another generation of "others" behind. Vega et al. (2015) draw attention to the ramifications of the education system leaving students behind. They explain:

> the gaps between students of color and White students suggest that the public-school system is one of many systems failing to meet their educational needs. Education and the economy are linked (Moore & Lewis, 2012); consequently, the expectation that all
students can become productive citizens in our economic society is idealistic. (Vega et al., 2015, p. 37)

In 2015, The U.S. Department of Education identified Latinx boys as having the highest dropout rates. Vega et al. (2015) illuminate the connection between education and the economy painting a dismal picture for future generations of Latinx students if there is not a major overhaul to how we support and educate children of color. This dismal scenario is not new. In 2009, Gándara documented “Latinxs made almost no progress in college completion rates in the last three decades” (p. 1) evidencing the historical context of underachievement. “Education can either serve as the ultimate guardian and guarantor of the American Dream, or as the means through which existing inequities are reproduced over time” (Noguera et al., 2015, p. 3). The underperforming of Latinx students is a reiteration of generations of exclusion legislated by those in power to maintain the U.S. caste system.

**Critical Race Theory: Calling Out Inequities**

*Waka Waka: Esto Es África*

*Waka Waka: This is Africa*

Critical race theory (CRT) purports that race is a social construction created to differentiate racial groups and to show the superiority or dominance of one race over the other. The early origins of CRT began in the 1970s when a group of legal scholars, lawyers and activists realized the civil rights movement of the 1960s had stalled and was perhaps backsliding (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Derrick Bell led the movement when he “began to question the basic assumptions of the law’s treatment of people of color in leading law reviews” (Crenshaw et al., 2010, p. 43). In addition to Bell, the movement’s father figure, essential works by Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado also created the foundation upon which CRT would grow. CRT includes many authors of multiple ethnicities including those of color in addition to those in the
majority ethnic groups. While CRT began as a law movement it is used in many other disciplines today including education.

One application of CRT in education that is particularly salient to this work is critical race pedagogy:

Critical race pedagogy has at least five elements: (1) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the importance of experiential knowledge; and (5) the use of interdisciplinary perspectives. (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p.25)

The centrality and intersectionality of race however seems to focus on the black-white binary. There is often an inequitable representation of one ethnic group, which is predictable and too often ignored. “Whiteness as a socially constructed race is still invisible and therein lies its power” (Gaffney, 2015, p. 5) and as such “whiteness confers privilege on someone for something that is not real” (Gaffney, 2015, p. 3). When examining achievement data, discipline data, even attendance data it is obvious the degree to which African American and Latinx students are the villains in each scenario. Members who enjoy the benefits of white privilege often assume that due to laws or rules affording rights to citizens of all colors, the assumption is made that all are equal. These assumptions are dangerous. Bonilla-Silva (2014) supported this position as he explains that “most whites assert that they don’t see any color, just people” (p. 17). This color “blindness” allows the focus of race discussions to thrive in the black-white binary. Thinking the color blindness absolves whites of responsibility for racially motivated thoughts, actions and reactions allow racism to survive and thrive. It also however pushes everyone not included in the black-white binary to the periphery and allows them to be ignored or forgotten (Bonilla-Silva, 2014).
Understanding that whiteness and white privilege are at work in society as well as in classrooms is one step toward understanding but weighing the degree to which it affects students is quite another (McLaren, 2015). Most of the teaching force in this country is young, middle-class, female and often white. Their background and life experiences have ingrained certain beliefs that lead to how these individuals perceive situations and students. We must consider the perception of students by the teachers and how a teacher’s own perspective affects the opportunity extended to students in their classrooms (McLaren, 2015). By extension, how does the teacher affect minority youth self-identity? According to Audi “Perception is a source of knowledge and justification by virtue of yielding beliefs that constitute knowledge or are justified” (Audi, 2011, p. 19). These perceptions that teachers form are not actually based on facts or evidence but rather based on their beliefs which may differ significantly from those they teach. Perceptions are affected by any number of influences including media, other people’s opinions, input from trusted individuals in their lives as well as more nuanced and covert input of which we are not aware.

The master narrative and power bloc remain in power largely due to our mindlessness. Our ignorance of the presence and resulting effects of covert bias ensures its livelihood. Yet there are examples of Latinx boys that navigate this entanglement of white privilege and find success. What drives them, how do they code-switch, what does the code-switching mean to their self-identity? Examining the role of whiteness and its related privilege is not only of note in the black-white binary but also in the wide array of other ethnicities that experience racial subordination in unique ways. Critical race theory is applicable to all people of color. It is society that narrows this view to only the black-white binary. For these reasons, movements such as the LatCrit experiment have come to the forefront dedicated to examining how Latinx people experience hegemony and white racial oppression.
Extending CRT to the Latinx Community

*Mi Gente: “Mi Música No Discrimina A Nadie”*

*My People: My music doesn’t discriminate against anyone*

Latinx critical theory, or more commonly referred to as LatCrit, is an extension to critical race theory that serves to provide specificity and voice to the experience of the Latinx community as a counter narrative to the black-white binary. Although the Latinx community is often encouraged to consider itself white and therefore should identify with whiteness they are not. Thus, it is not truly a binary but rather the White – Non-white/Black experience. The non-white experience that the Latinx community lives is apparent not only in the array of colors of skin but in their language, culture, origin, and status of citizenship. Using a Latinx viewpoint, the LatCrit movement has the same five defining elements as CRT including:

(1) The importance of transdisciplinary approaches; (2) An emphasis on experiential knowledge; (3) A challenge to dominant ideologies; (4) The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination and (5) A commitment to social justice. (Bernal, 2002, p. 109)

These defining elements drive research, pedagogy, and practice with a Latinx focus just as feminism, Asians, Native Americans and other critical theory groups work.

While the movement began as an experiment stemming from a 1995 Latinx Legal Issues meeting in Puerto Rico, it officially began the next year in La Jolla by hosting the first LatCrit Conference. The conference structure forced participants to create a structured space for all people of color to participate. The LatCrit conference subsequently is guided by four standing guideposts. These guideposts focus and center the work:

1) The multidimensionality of Latina/o identity and its relationship to current legal, political, and cultural regimes and practices.
2) The salience of the Caribbean region, in understanding how local particularities produce (inter)national patterns of privilege and subordination.

3) Cross-group histories or experiences with law and power, such as those based on the intersections of class, gender, race, sexuality and religion, elucidating intra-Latina/o diversities and contextualizing Latina/o experience within intergroup frameworks and Euro-Heteropatriarchy.

4) Connections or contrasts of LatCrit to other genres of scholarship. (Montoya, 2006, p. 3)

The LatCrit community must carefully explore these topics while applying to themselves. The Latinx community must embrace their diversity and the richness of their community whether that be color, language, faith, or place of origin. Another unique position that LatCrit theorists must remember and revisit often, is the historical role of the empire-building in Latin America and how that still affects the Latinx community’s view their role both domestically and internationally (Johnson, 2000). This empire building mindset infers a sort of pecking order within the minority. Caution therefore must be exercised in ensuring there is not minority-on-minority oppression in play. The vast diversity within the Latinx community demands we take extra care not to homogenize the group while being sensitive to intergroup pressures and tensions.

The themes of the LatCrit movement are influenced by a wide array of critical theory professionals including Kimberlé Crenshaw and Mari Matsuda in their work on intersectionality and multiplicity (Valdes, 2009). Anti-essentialism and multi-dimensionality have been guided by the work of Berta Hernandez-Truyol, Darrin Hutchison and Angela Harris while Mari Matsuda and Athena Mutua have contributed to anti-subordination activism (Valdes, 2009). The list of names that have influenced the LatCrit movement are as numerous as are the areas in which
those contributions have been made.

LatCrit draws on the strengths outlined in critical race theory, and emphasizes the intersectionality of experience with oppression, and the need to extend conversations about ‘race’ and racism beyond the Black/White binary. Freire pushes also to look at the intersectionality of resistance. (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 38)

Freire’s problem-posing approach is a form of liberation. His goal is to elicit societal change by developing and shifting people of color toward critical consciousness (Freire, 1996). Freire, like CRT, attempts to expose claims of neutrality as a facade built by dominant groups to protect the underlying self-interest, power, and privilege. Freire’s (1996) problem-posing approach views students as active agents in the knowledge construction process. His approach provides space for student voice and interaction. In this way he honors the students as complex cultural beings that have much to contribute to the knowledge construction process is directly in contrast to the current “banking” model schools implement (Freire, 1996). Freire advocated for a co-construction process where teachers and students worked together to learn and grow academically. More recently, Angela Valenzuela purports the idea of “additive schooling”. Like Freire’s problem-posing approach, Valenzuela believes students should be active agents in the knowledge construction process. Additive schooling is a system of schooling that is about equalizing opportunity and assimilating students into the larger world, through a bicultural process (Valenzuela, 1999). “In this world, students do not have to choose… This pluralistic model of schooling builds on students’ bicultural experience, which all minority youth bring with them to school” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 269). Tara Yosso added another option for inclusive education supporting Freire’s problem-posing approach in the modern day. Yosso (2005) strove to explore and define the wealth of cultural capital students bring to school even though mainstream methods prevent the recognition of this cultural capital and instead solely apply a
white middle-class culture as the standard.

Using CRT, Yosso shifted the focus from a white middle class standard to the culture of communities of color and develops a mestizaje theory with new tenets that apply to those who are left out of the mainstream tenets (Yosso, 2005). These new tenets include Aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital. Like Freire’s naming process, Yosso’s strength in applying CRT to examining cultural capital brings those who are traditionally excluded and silenced in academic research to the forefront and gives them voice, yielding power to the cultural experiences of communities of color to change the dialogue (Yosso, 2005). Freire, Valenzuela and Yosso all focus on naming the world, and helping minorities find their voice. Finding voice however is no easy task. While explicit racist acts may have declined, subtle acts of racism use these new non-white middle-class tenets to promote racism allowing oppression to thrive.

**Mechanisms that Promulgate Oppression**

*Mojado: “Por Qué Te Persiguen Mojado” (Ricardo Arjona)*

*Wetback: Why are they chasing you?*

Historically, promises of equity and feigned support of newcomers provided the white majority cover for the racist oppression people of color have endured. Emboldened by half-hearted expressions of support, the white majority comfortably has remained blind to the privilege afforded them. As stated previously, Gaffney (2015) made it clear “whiteness as a socially constructed race is still invisible and therein lies it power” (p. 5) and as such “whiteness confers privilege on someone for something that is not real” (p. 3) allowing those enjoying those privileges to be ignorant of it if they so choose. Members who enjoy the benefits of white privilege often choose to believe the rights of *all* citizens, are equally protected by the law. These assumptions are dangerous. The blissful ignorance, or blatant refusal, to consider the covert
denial of historical experiences and their limiting influence on current opportunities accessible to today’s students by the white majority does not make these experiences disappear or any less true. We must also consider the perception of students by the teachers and how a teacher’s own perspective affects the opportunity extended to students in their classrooms. By extension, how does the teacher affect minority youth self-identity? Understanding that whiteness and white privilege are at work in our classrooms is one step toward understanding, but weighing the degree to which it affects students is quite another. Most of the teaching force in this county are young, middle-class, white females. Their background and life experience have ingrained certain beliefs that lead to how these individuals perceive situations and students. According to Audi (2011) “Perception is a source of knowledge and justification by virtue of yielding beliefs that constitute knowledge or are justified” (p. 19). These perceptions that teachers form are not actually based on facts or evidence but rather based on their beliefs which may differ significantly from those they teach. Perceptions are affected by any number of influences including media, other people’s opinions, input from trusted individuals in their lives as well as more nuanced and covert input of which we are not aware. The master narrative and power bloc remain in power largely due to our mindlessness. Our ignorance of the presence and resulting effects of covert bias ensures its livelihood.

According to a 2004 report from the Pew Hispanic Center, Latinxs compared to other minorities, have much lower academic achievement, have the highest dropout rates, and only graduate 53.2% (Pew Research Center, 2004, p. 4). In 2013, a study by Clark et al. confirmed that Latinxs still had the highest dropout rate of all minorities. The Latinx Achievement Gap (2013) focused on factors that may lead to the disturbing reality described above. Madrid (2013) shared “Latinxs are not only perceived as having less academic potential than White students, but also are less likely than Whites to be nominated for enrichment or accelerated programs” (p.
The lack of access to rigorous courses also means reduced access to the best teachers, who are traditionally tapped for advanced coursework. Other concerns outlined by Madrid (2013) included “unqualified teachers, inadequate curriculum and instructional strategies and expectations, as well as poor relationships among, staff, students, and community” (p. 8). The current marginalization of Latinx students continues to echo the powerlessness and cultural imperialism that awaited those who chose U.S. Citizenship after the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. While in 1848 the violence imposed upon the new U.S. citizens was via exploitation and lynching, the new mechanism for violence is stealth. 21st century racism may be inflicted as an explicit act, but more often is perpetuated by nuanced manifestations such as stereotype threat, microaggressions, and raciolinguistic practices that maintain the historical marginalization of minorities especially Latinxs.

**Stereotype Threat As A Mechanism of Colorblind Racism**

Frijolero: “No Me Digas Beaner” (Molotov)

Beamer: “Don’t call me Beamer”

Stereotype threat is a present-day mechanism of oppression that hails from colonial domination. As coined by C.M. Steele (1997), stereotype threat, refers to the situational threat of negative stereotypes, that do not depend on cuing an internalized anxiety or expectancy (p. 617). Steele points out that stereotype threat is different from token status in that they are different processes that may co-occur (Steele, 1995). Taylor and Antony (2000) “defined stereotype threat as the social and psychological sense of peril resulting from the possibility of negative racial stereotypes being unfairly applied to students solely because of their skin color” (as cited in Tuitt & Carter, 2008, p. 52). Stephan et al. (2000) defined stereotype threats “as negative stereotypes that are implied threats to the in-group because they lead in-group members to fear that negative consequences will befall them in the course of intergroup interaction” (p. 241). Whaley (1998)
suggested that stereotype threat is an overgeneralization of disidentification. Whaley (1998) continue to explore the over generalization of stereotype threat offering alternative hypothesis for why students drop out of high school instead of stereotype threat. Brown and Pinel (2003) suggested that for stereotype threat to occur, an individual must be invested in the evaluative implications of his or her performance further clarifying the perspectives. Aronson (2004) explained based on hundreds of interviews he conducted many minority students “believe that the stereotype places them in situations freighted with unnerving expectations. Stereotype threat is partly situational; it varies in intensity as a function of social climate and of students' perceptions about their own goals and abilities” (p. 4). Stereotype threat has a negative impact on the academic performance of individuals in marginalized groups (Mello et al., 2012, p. 9) and “are most detrimental to individuals who are identified with or who value the stereotype-relevant domain” (Smith, 2004, p. 181). Aronson explained “stereotypes suppress the performance, motivation, and learning of students who have to contend with them, and they suggest what educators can do to help” (Aronson, 2004, p. 17). He goes on to explain that stereotype threat can “actually boost performance on easy or well-learned tasks in which additional effort pays off (O'Brien & Crandall, 2003 as cited by Aronson, 2004, p. 18).

All minority students may experience this phenomenon. Imagine however that you have limited English proficiency or are a girl in addition to identifying as a minority thereby achieving double minority status. Rodriguez (2014) defined double minority status as “the psychological state created when two devalued identities interact to influence the individual in a way that is greater than the sum of the independent (Croizet & Claire, 1998, p. 659)” (p. 195). This double minority status maybe why many educators describe Latinxs as the most academically disadvantaged group in the country when you consider their performance on academic
achievement, test scores, and retention (Nieto, 2004). Guyll et al., (2010) support this perspective stating:

stereotype threat may have larger effects among Latinx/a students who are less acculturated or have stronger ethnic identities because the Latinx/a stereotype is more readily activated in the minds of these individuals, thereby increasing vulnerability to stereotype threat. Also, under stereotype threat conditions, stronger ethnic identity may increase the threat experienced because presenting one’s group in a positive light is more valued. (p. 120)

Aronson and Aronson (2008) explained that stereotype threat is felt more deeply in those who care about doing well and is further heightened by those who have a deep identity with their ethnic group. The authors explicitly refer to Latinxs as a group that culturally fits this description. It should be noted however that Aronson and Aronson (2008) also pointed out that “Latinxs who are "bicultural" that is, who feel just as firmly grounded in mainstream culture as in their culture of origin, are less stereotype vulnerable than Latinxs who are more heavily identified with Latinx culture” (p. 288). “While stereotype threat focuses on perceptions of negative learning environment conditions, racial microaggressions speak more to the racist behaviors and actions of white individuals towards non-white students” (Tuitt & Carter, 2008, p. 53).

**Microaggressions As a Mechanism of Colorblind Racism**

*Voto Latino: “Para La Igualdad De Razas” (Molotov)*

*The Latino Vote: “For the equality of races”*

“Even though we’ve come a long way since the civil rights movement in the 1960s and blatant discrimination occurs less often, subtle forms of discrimination occur every day” (Wheeler, 2016, p. 329). Another mechanism of colorblind racism are microaggressions.
Microaggressions are “fiendishly efficient in perpetuating unequal opportunity, because they are woven into all the threads of our work life and of U.S. education” (Rowe, 1990, p. 156). In the term micro assault, it is important to recognize that “micro” refers to the size of the assault, not magnitude. “Chester Pierce coined the term microaggressions in 1970, and the concept has since been theorized and studied in the fields of law (Davis 1989), education (Solórzano 1998), psychology (Sue 2010), and social work (Ross-Sheriff 2012)” (Huber & Solorzano, 2015, p. 1). Solorzano (1998) cited Peggy Davis’s (1989) definition of microaggressions as “stunning, automatic acts of disregard that stem from unconscious attitudes of white superiority and constitute a verification of black inferiority (p. 1576)” (p. 124). These subtle acts of racism are seldom investigated or defended. Microaggressions are not unique solely to African American but any minority group, especially Latinxs who achieve the double minority status. The oppression of these groups is reinforced via daily oppressive acts, consciously or unconsciously by the white majority. Sue (2010) defined microaggressions as “the everyday verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative message to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership” (p. 3). Sue goes on to explain that microaggressions can be more harmful than even hate crimes as their power lies in their invisibility to both perpetrators and even receivers (Sue, 2011). This subtle racism occurs because “aversive racists consciously recognize and endorse egalitarian values, and because they truly aspire to be nonprejudiced” (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005, p. 620). Microaggressions have recently been characterized as a form of “hypersensitivity” (Gitlin, 2015) that threatens “academic freedom” and the sharing of political views (Volokh, 2015) as cited by Huber and Solórzano in their 2015 policy brief (p. 1). The authors go on to underscore the real impact of racial microaggressions as a way for people of color to name their experiences of implicit biases day after day (Huber & Solórzano, 2015).
These microaggressions are manifestations of institutional racism that is embedded in polices and processes that “systematically subordinate, marginalize, and exclude people of color” (Huber & Solórzano, 2015, p. 2). Essed (2002) pointed out that everyday racism is entrenched within mainstream institutions so that patterns of dominance are largely invisible to those in power and passively tolerated by the majority (Fleras, 2016, p. 4). Barnes (2000) supported Essed and Fleras, explaining “acts and words of everyday racism become normalized through incorporation into daily interactions (from name calling to racist jokes to avoidance of close contact) in ways that reinforce the powers of privilege” (Fleras, 2016, p. 4). Nadal et al. (2014) explained that “microaggressions have been found to be pervasive in the lives of individuals of various marginalized groups and have been reported to have a negative impact on mental health” (p. 68). They go on to further explain that Latinxs are not a monolithic group but rather there are in-group differences that include “country of origin, skin color, physical appearance, language use, speech characteristics, generational status, geographic representation, acculturation level and ethnic identity status” (p. 69). The nuances of in-group differences will affect how group members experience these microaggressions.

Sue (2010) provided a more in-depth look at the manifestations of microaggressions purporting that microaggressions manifest in one of three forms: microassults, microinsults and microinvalidations. Microassaults are defined as conscious beliefs or attitudes that are intentionally expressed, overtly or covertly, toward a marginalized person or socially devalued group (Sue, 2011, p. 8). Microinsults are “subtle snubs often unconsciously disguised as a compliment or positive statement directed toward the target person or group” (Sue, 2010, p. 9). “Microinvalidations are perhaps the most insidious, damaging and harmful form because they directly attack or deny the experiential realities of socially devalued groups” (Sue, 2010, p. 10). Wheeler’s work (2016) supported Sue’s breakdown of manifestations of microaggressions.
Wheeler (2016) stated “the modern evolution of antidiscrimination law combined with other social and political developments have caused contemporary forms of discrimination to become “subtler than the overtly prejudiced behaviors of the past” (p. 322).

The effects of microaggressions have been well documented. Students, for example, experience these offenses most frequently in school from peers and teachers based on perceived ethnicity and language ability (Ayón & Philibin, 2017). Keels et al. (2017) cite Cheryan & Monin, 2005 and Nguyen & Ryan, 2008 to explain:

microaggressions affect individuals even when they do not consciously recognize that it has occurred; research also suggests that subtle microaggressions may have the strongest effects. The stress of one racial microaggression can last long after the assault because the victim often continues to spend time with the microaggressor while considering whether the assailant intended harm, and whether or how they must launch a sufficient response. (Yosso et al, 2009, p. 670 as cited by Keels et al, 2017. p. 1321)

This residual harm occurs even when the offended individuals do not consciously recognize the offense. Winter et al. (2017) identified three key themes that evolve from microaggressions in K-8 settings. Based on their research they identify three key overarching themes that are a part of micro-aggressive experiences including vulnerability and protection, social skills, and community building (Winter et al., 2017). Ultimately “being involved in microaggression in school, whether as an aggressor, a target, or a bystander, made students less comfortable in their school communities” (Winter et al., 2017, p. 596).

**Raciolinguistics As A Mechanism of Colorblind Racism**

*Despierta: “Aprendan Inglés, You Forget About Home” (Snow Tha Product)*

*Wake up!: They learn English, you forget about home*
The segregation of African-American students was based on race while Mexican-Americans were segregated based on race and language filling the early twentieth century with resistance. Post-World War II, Mexican-Americans organized more frequently and focused on education. Mendez vs. Westminster (1946) was the first constitutional case to successfully challenge segregation (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2012, p.73). In the sixties and seventies politicization and tensions rose. “Lau vs. Nichols (1974) and Serna vs. Portales Municipal Schools (1974) have later served to assist students whose first language is not the primary language of the United States” (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2012, p.76) by bringing attention back to ESL and bilingual programs. The eighties saw an increase in military spending and a reduction in educational spending creating reforms that trended toward reversing bilingual and bicultural programs in favor of English-only education (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2012). In the nineties to the early 2000s, the Latinx student population nearly doubled with no resolution of the marginalization of Latinx. This increase in Latinx students represented nearly “60% of the total growth in public schools with 85% of Latinx students born in the United States” (Frey & Gonzales, 2008, p. i) and still no improvement in the marginalization of Latinx students. More than seventy years later and the Latinx students still suffer from powerlessness in the face of cultural imperialism in public schools.

Anzaldúa (2012) explained “… if you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself” (p. 59). Language therefore is power. “The real issue is the power of the dominant society to manipulate the debate over the languages of instruction as a means to deny effective education to millions of immigrant children in their native languages” (Macedo et al., 2016, p. 9). Macedo et al. (2016) went on to explain “linguistic racism abounds even in so called democratic societies which are marked by asymmetries of
power relations along the lines of language, race, ethnicity and class” (p. 11). Theresa Pac (2008) expanded this concept further in her work by explaining:

most Americans and populations worldwide take for granted that English is the national language of the US and the lingua franca of the world… English and its dominant status is a socially and politically motivated construct (Cooper 1989; Phillipson 2010)...

American Anglo-Saxon colonists quickly emerged as a dominant political force, gradually establishing English as the official language in the public domain and imposing English through explicit or implicit language policies on the linguistically and ethnically diverse peoples encountered during the pursuit of Manifest Destiny in North America (p. 13).

Castro-Salazar and Bagley (2012) cited Valenzuela’s (1999) insights citing “schools have played a significant role in the inculcation of dominant values, keeping Mexican students subordinated via cultural relationships and beliefs systems indoctrinated through the curriculum” (p. 71). Schools systemically minimized the language and culture of minorities through laws, policies, and practices. By 2011, 32 states had legislated English as their official language (Pac, 2012). “Legislating English as the official language of the US is not about ‘preserving bonds’ or ‘providing opportunities’; it is about restricting language rights, limiting access to education, impeding socioeconomic mobility, and ultimately making assimilation into the American nationality for specific populations more difficult” (Pac, 2012, p. 6).

Educational policy in the United States reflects an implicit economic need to socialize immigrants and members of oppressed groups to fill necessary but undesirable, low-status jobs. Instead of the democratic education the United States claims to provide, what is in place is a sophisticated colonial model of education designed to deny access to millions. The result further
exacerbates the equity gap already victimizing a great number of so-called minority students. (Macedo et al., 2016, p. 41)

The current educational landscape is not much different from the educational legacy extended to minorities in this country.

Hegemonic language policies are not limited to feeling pride or shame about one’s language. Hegemony goes much deeper than personal idiosyncrasies: it can keep people in positions of subservience and powerlessness, or elevate them to unearned positions of privilege and power (Nieto, 2013, p. 15).

This deficit view is pervasive in the U.S. educational system and the results are predictable: who will exceed expectations and those who will fall short. Without intentionally combatting the “racial inequities that are foundational to and exacerbated by global capitalism, the commodification of language associated with efforts to promote these programs will benefit class-normative white people more than racialized populations both in the US and abroad” (Nelson & Flores, 2017, p. 641).

Language and culture are inextricably linked. The English only movement is not only a form of stealing one’s language but also a means of erasing one’s culture, history, and legacy (Macedo et al., 2016). “Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next” (Macedo et al., p. 37). Prescribing acceptable language also prescribes acceptable culture. Bilingual education has little to do with teaching English but more to do with “the hegemonic forces that aggressively want to maintain the present asymmetry to the distribution of cultural and economic goods” (Macedo et al., 2012, p. 39). Flores and Rosa (2017) supported this stance by adding the following to the conversation;
seeking to identify the specific linguistic practices that constitute Standard English is a futile effort; instead, we should concern ourselves with the ways that Standard English is produced as a cultural emblem and how the circulation of that emblem perpetuates raciolinguistic ideologies and thereby contributes to processes of social reproduction and societal stratification (p. 152).

As Flores and Rosa (2015) noted, both the mainstream subtractive (English-only) and additive (bilingual education) models of language education marginalize racially and linguistically-minoritized students and reproduce white supremacy—an issue born of a contradictory convergence of interests in its inception as federal policy (Sung, 2010, p. 681).

**Standardized Tests as a Mechanism of Oppression**

*We’re All Mexicans: La Voz de Silencio (Emilio Estefan et al.)*

*We’re All Mexicans: The Voice of Silence*

High stakes testing is employed across states in most public schools nationally. Stemming from a movement desiring increased accountability standardized tests as “barometers of student success and achievement raise some fundamental issues relative to students” (Solórzano, 2008, p. 260). “This demand for accountability in the U.S. public education system is growing and birthed the multimillion dollar "high-stakes" tests industry serving as the primary means of individual and system assessment” (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 5). “These tests are labeled high-stakes because the scores are directly tied to issues of consequence, contrasting with earlier use to identify gaps in learning, but not for reward or punishment” (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 5). This drive for accountability by U.S. politicians and citizens alike was motivation to “solve” the underperformance crisis in the U.S. Au (2009) explained the difficult situations in which schools find themselves. “Schools simultaneously accomplish the fundamentally contradictory goals of reproducing, the social and material relations of capitalist
production while hegemonically working to win the “spontaneous consent” of the students/staff through appeals to individual equality within the educational and social meritocracy (Apple, 1995 as cited by Au, 2009, p. 13). In other words, schools are designed to keep students in their place while feigning equality. For all the high hopes that politicians had regarding accountability solving student performance issues, the results have been dismal, which may well have been their plan. Researchers have expressed numerous concerns regarding high stakes testing, including that high-stakes testing:

- narrows the content and skills taught and learned within a discipline. Second, a high-stakes test preempts time and conforms disciplines not tested. This narrows the curriculum across subject on the high-stakes tests at the upper grades, displaces the content and skills of non-tested lower grades, altering the curriculum across grades. All of these paradoxical negative consequences of high-stakes testing are chronic, predictable, and well documented over centuries and across continents. (Madaus, Higgins, & Russell, 2009, p. 141)

Amrein and Berliner (2002) reviewed high stakes testing across the U.S. and found “analyzing data across eighteen states finds that 62% of states with high school exit exams saw an increase in drop-out rates when they implemented these exams” (p. 5). “Tienken (2011) argued that neither the Common Core Standards nor large-scale testing programs have been shown to improve students’ literacy out-comes” (Pollack & Jeffrey, 2017, p. 1). Pollack and Jeffrey (2017) also cited Christenson et al., 2007 and Clarke et al., 2003 stating “high-stakes testing programs actually widen achievement gaps in learning opportunities” (p. 5). So, to these ends, schools clearly “play a role in reproducing social inequality through the reproduction of educational inequality” (Au, 2009, p. 9). Narrowing of curriculum designed via a “means-ends rationality also maintains and justifies socioeconomic hierarchies” (Au, 2009, p. 24). A critical
component of maintaining these socioeconomic hierarchies includes serious racial and ethnic
group differences. “Long before NCLB applied high-stakes consequences to standardized tests,
results had revealed consistent racial and ethnic group differences” (Altshuler & Schmautz,
2006, p. 7).

High stakes testing incorporates two culturally held values. The first is that achievement
is an individual accomplishment The second value is that individuals must display their
accomplishment publicly (Madaus et al., 2009, p. 62). “The white, middle-class norm of ‘beating
on your breast to show off is antithetical to the Hispanic value of modesty and self-effacing
behaviors” (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 10). The truth is there are numerous examples of
cultural issues with high-stakes testing. Other issues include “unintended harmful effects on
students at particular risk for academic failure because of poverty, lack of proficiency in English,
disability, and membership in population subgroups that have been educationally disadvantaged”
(Au, 2009, p. 5). Altshuler and Schmautz (2006), explained this further citing “Success, it
appeared, required the students to distance themselves from their original cultural identification.
Concurrently, it required the acquisition of a school-based identity, as well as the materialistic
definitions of success characteristic of white Americans (Cordeiro & Carspecken)” (p.7). This
may be why African American and Latino students are twice as likely as White students to drop
out of school, and students from low-income families are two times more likely to drop out than
students from high-income families (McFarland et al., 2018). High-stakes tests are another
hegemonic force wielded upon minority students to control outcomes and maintain the dominant
majority’s power.

Influences on Boys’ Identity

Manifestations of Masculinity

“Tu Hombre Perfecto”: No Hay Hombre Perfecto (Marco Antonio Solis)
Your Perfect Man: There is no perfect man.

Masculinity has numerous meanings and those definitions often are tied to social contexts. Montalvo Reyna & Garcia Cadena (2009) cite Corsi (1995) who described a type of masculinity as “constructed on the base to avoid everything that is culturally defined as feminine, that is to say, the fear to the femininity becomes the axis around which is structured the masculine thing” (p. 140). Kimmel (1994) considered masculinity like a collection of meaning in constant change which we constructed through our relations with ourselves, with others and our world. It is not the manifestation of an inner, static essence and a-temporary, historical and it is socially constructed. It does not arise from the biological thing, it is created through culture (Montalvo Reyna & Garcia Cadena, 2009, p. 140).

“Masculinity ‘lives within a discourse that is extremely complex, containing reverse and counter discourses’, argues Harris (1995, p. 5). It is from within such discursive positionings that masculinity is to be viewed as fluid rather than fixed” (Dalley-Trim, 2007, p. 200).

Gause (2005) cites Dr. Naim Akbar (1982,1992) who asserted “maleness” is a mindset that operates with the same principles as biology, that is, it is a determined biological fact and is not subject to choice. Akbar goes on to suggest that appetite, physical determinants, drive this mindset supported by instincts, urges, desires, and feelings. Akbar (1982,1992) explained “male mentality” is predicated on a sexist and objectified perception of manhood and predominates only in boys who are not willing to take the prerogative and responsibilities of “real manhood”.

Gilbert and Gilbert (1998b) supported this perspective in their view stating:

Becoming a man is a matter of constructing oneself in and being constructed by the available ways of being male in a particular society. It is a matter of negotiating the various discourses of femininity and masculinity available in our culture, those powerful
sets of meanings and practices which we must draw on to participate in our culture and to establish who we are. (pp. 46–47)

Despite this diversity—"there is no singular, unified discourse of masculinity—masculinities are linked to each other and constitute a hierarchical relationship” (Dalley-Trim, 2007, p. 201).

Boyce & Buckholtz (2009) cite Hearn and Collinson (1994) who refer to masculinities, in plural, “defining them like combinations of actions and signs, partly powerful, partly arbitrary, executed in reaction and in relation to emotional demands and complex material relations, which mean what is a man” (p. 141). Frank et al. (2003) supported this position of the plurality of masculinity.

An uncritical view of boys as a unitary group bound by an abundance of testosterone is not only an inaccurate way to represent boys, but also hides important differences which may play a significant role in current discrimination and violence in schools. Representations of boys as a cohesive group enables a particular reading that highlights injustices assumed to impact on all boys, without acknowledging the privileged elements of masculinities that advantage some boys over other boys and over some girls. (p. 120)

**The Culture of Machismo**

*“Pedro Navaja”: Matón De Esquina (Ruben Blades)*

**Pedro Navaja: Corner Bully**

There are many phenomena that effect identity in Latinx boys; however, one phenomenon that is critical in the development and identity of Latinx boys is Machismo. Hurtado & Sinha (2016) explained: “In the popular imaginary, the word machismo has become the social signifier of all that is male chauvinism. The use of a Spanish word has cast an entire hemisphere as the epitome of male patriarchal privilege and small-mindedness” (p. 11). Maakrun (1988) defined it as “male dominance and control over others, particularly women” (p. 2). Torres et al. (2002)
citing Gilmore (1990) stated “machismo is not a phenomenon unique to the Latino culture; concepts of manhood often associated with machismo are found in most cultures of the world and are nearly, but not totally, universal” (p. 164). Torres et al. also cited Quintero and Estrada (1998) saying “The masculinity literature on Latino men in the United States has primarily, until recently, maintained a monolithic representation of machismo, emphasizing negative stereotype perceptions and overgeneralizations of rigidly dichotomized attitudes, behaviors, and gender role characteristics” (p. 164). Huyge et al. (2014) shifted our attention to the manifestation of machismo and the results in schools when citing both Salisbury and Jackson (1996) and Schrock and Schwalbe (2009):

Hegemonic masculinity theory states that academic engagement, which is strongly associated with femininity, undermines the masculine status. Therefore, when it does not suit boys’ idea of masculinity to get good grades or to achieve attributes that are traditionally perceived as female, such as obedience and passive learning, some of them will behave in an overtly counterproductive way at school. (p. 2)

They go on to cite the wide body of qualitative research that those “boys who display attitudes more associated with masculine status – ‘macho’ traits – are opposed to school, that is, show more anti-school attitudes (Connell 1989; Francis 1999; Jackson 2002; Mac and Ghaill 1994; Willis 1977; Younger, Warrington, and McClellan 2005)” (Huyge et al., 2014, p. 2).

The masculinity literature on Latino men in the United States has primarily, until recently, maintained a monolithic representation of machismo, emphasizing negative stereotype perceptions and overgeneralizations of rigidly dichotomized attitudes, behaviors, and gender role characteristics (Quintero & Estrada, 1998). (Torres, Solberg, & Carlstrom, 2002, p. 164)
While there is an overwhelming depth on the negative aspects of machismo and its manifestation in Latinx boys’ lives, there is a growing body of research challenging the monolithic view of machismo.

Researchers including “Anzaldúa, Almaguer, and Mirandé depict machismo as complex and complicated; familiar and foreign; and dependent by a variety of social factors” (Morales, 2015, p. 3). Morales (2015) goes on to state “[Machismo] appears to be a more complex and diverse phenomenon than is commonly assumed” and “the other side of machismo, the positive side, refers to a connection to family and chivalry (Gonzalez, 1996)” (p. 20). Torres et al. (2002) also posited “the Latino perspective of machismo encompasses a dualistic paradigm that may not necessarily be affected among some Latino men regardless of their level of acculturation” (p. 170). Torres et al. (2002) go one to summarize the error in monolithic thinking around machismo:

Practitioners must therefore be aware and knowledgeable of the changing demographics of the Latino community, the cultural influences on Latino men in particular, and avoid assuming a homogeneous perspective in their diagnostic and treatment decision process. Practitioners should consider the importance of the multidimensional elements of machismo (historical, social, structural, economic, and political) in their attempts to explain the phenomena and accurately assess Latino men’s particular behaviors in a clinical setting. (p. 176).

Facets of Identity

La Vida Es Un Carnival: “Y Todo Cambia” (Celia Cruz)

Life is a Carnival: “And everything changes”
Developing identity while experiencing the deep roots and outward expressions of inequity, oppression and alienation contaminate the development of identity as a whole and across perceived roles. According to Noguera (2003):

As young people enter into adolescence and develop a stronger sense of their individual identities (Erickson, 1968, p. 18), the meaning and significance of race also change. Where it was once an ambiguous concept based largely on differences in physical appearance, language, and styles of behavior, race becomes a more rigid identity construct as children learn the historical, ideological, and cultural dimensions associated with racial group membership (Cross et al., 1991, pp. 34-49; Tatum, 1992, p. 39). (p. 444)

Currently in the United States, federal rules mandate the separate classification of race and ethnicity (Smith et al., 2010, p. 623). Presently, in light of the ever-increasing ethnic diversity in the United States “adolescents interact across racial and ethnic lines…, making ethnic differences more apparent and negotiating ethnic identity more complicated than it may have been in the past when racial and ethnic groups were more isolated from each other (Wakefield and Hudley 2007)” (Smith et al., 2010, p. 625). The notion of differences in negotiating ethnic and racial identities appear as present-day manifestations aligning to social identity theory that Henri Tajfel introduced in the late 1970s from the psychological perspective as well as Stryker’s work from the sociological perspective. Peter Burke and Judy Tully (1977), built on the work of Stryker et al., validated “the self as a whole is a collection of identities… each identity is associated with particular interactional settings or roles” (p. 883). Burke and Reitzes (1981) “work substantiated identities are social products, self-meanings that are formed in particular situations and organized hierarchically to produce the self and identities that are symbolic and reflexive in character” (p. 84). In sum, “a role/identity is a set of meanings that are taken to
characterize the self-in-role” (Burke & Reitzes, 1981, p. 85). Roles may vary but could include our identity in various social situations such as family, school, work, faith, or with friends. Identities influence the choices we make. Activities that result from the choice have “meanings that correspond to, reinforce, and display the identity meanings of the individual” (Burke & Reitzes, 1981, p. 91). Callero (1985) illustrated salient role-identities have implications for how we define other and with whom we develop specific social relationships (p. 205). He also concludes that “a single role-identity represents only a piece of a very complex self-structure” (Callero, 1985, p. 214). One manifestation of role identity that has been well researched and documented is scholar identity.

“To often, minority students believe that they must choose between a positive ethnic identity and a strong academic identity” (Nasir & Saxe, 2003, p. 14). Whether this pressure is perceived or real, emanates from friends, family or self, matters not. The reality for an overwhelming majority is real. Developing an academic or scholarly identity is intentional. It is not in place of other aspects of the self but rather a role. Identity is a complex phenomenon. It is dynamic.

For many children, schools play an important role in shaping their racial identities because they are one of the few social settings where kids interact with people from different backgrounds. To the extent that a school’s sorting processes disproportionately relegate black and brown children to spaces within schools that are perceived as negative and marginal, it is likely that children of color will come to perceive certain activities and courses either suitable or off-limits for them. (Noguera & Akom, 2000, p. 31) Nonetheless students often receive one single deficit driven label that cripples them while they themselves select multiple labels. “Adolescents from all ethnic backgrounds selected multiple labels to describe themselves, testifying to the existence of multiple ethnic identities for
adolescents. Those from Mexican and Chinese backgrounds selected more labels than did those from European backgrounds” (Fuligni et al., 2005, p. 806). Fuligni et al. go on to explain rather than assimilating into a generic American identity, adolescents from ethnic minority families seek to create identities that represent a combination of their ethnic origins with their status as American teenagers (Waters, 1990). It also suggests that rather than being in opposition, adolescents’ ethnic and American identities can coexist and be combined into a new and different identity that is relevant for adolescents’ lives (Fuligni et al., 2005, p. 807).

This may be because cultural practices are “socially patterned activities organized with reference to community norms and values—are important for the enactment and formation of identity. From a practice-oriented perspective, it is through cultural practices—as people “do” life—that identities are shaped, constructed, and negotiated (Holland, Lachoitte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Martin, 2000; Moll & González, in press; Nasir, 2002; Nasir & Kirshner, in press; Wenger, 1999)” (Nasir & Saxe, 2003, p. 14). Therefore, developing a scholarly identity is a result of “doing” school in a way that further develops the student’s progress towards his or her goals.

**Developing a Scholarly Identity**

*Pégate: “Para Quien Quiera” (Ricky Martin)*

*Come closer: “For the ones who want it”*

In her seminal work, Nilda Flores-González (2002) asserts that minority students can in fact do well in school without sacrificing their ethnic identity. Her research cites numerous studies that all contend “minorities can and do find ways to achieve on their own without jeopardizing cultural or family affiliations…they have adopted a school-kid identity that is expressed in their different worlds” (Flores-González, 2002, p. 11). Developing a school-kid or
scholar identity is key to achieving success within the academy. “The strength of adolescents’ ethnic identification is more relevant to their academic adjustment than the specific labels that they choose” (Fuligni et al., 2005, p. 809). Furthermore, this provides additional motivation without which they may not reach the same degree of achievements as European American peers (Fuligni et al., 2005). “In most school settings, the extent to which students view themselves as learners and intellectual beings plays a major role in how well they achieve and the confidence they have in academic settings” (Whiting, 2006, p. 223). It is important to note Ogbu (1995) and Delpit (1995) as cited by White & Lowenthal (2011), respectively held contentions that there are “codes of power” students need to achieve success in existing educational, economic, and political systems” (p. 285). Part of this code of power are the components of the scholar identity. In 1995, Delpit stated that minority students need to be explicitly taught the codes of power and language patterns they will be expected to know and use in the K-12 academic environment (White & Lowenthal, 2011). In 2011, some 15 years later, White and Lowenthal argued similarly to Delpit, demonstrating little movement or development in teaching students these codes of power and the corresponding academic discourse needed for success within the academy (White & Lowenthal, 2011, p. 301). “Adams and his associates (2002) found educational environments that promote a supportive intellectual environment while also offering critical and analytic awareness of societal issues help to facilitate positive academic identity development” (White & Lowenthal, 2011, p. 300). White and Lowenthal extend the definition by adding the role that language (i.e., discourse) plays in identity and identity development. They stated “identity is, in turn, reflected in language. Language is culturally-based. Discourse communities are, therefore, influenced greatly by culture” (White & Lowenthal, 2011, p. 303). Therefore, students need to be taught that adding academic discourse is, much like learning any new language, an additive process. Code-switching is a process that gives students the tools they need to enter a new
As with language so is the process of integrating multiple roles or facets of our identity. According to Syed (2010) identity configurations are “the process by which individuals reconcile their multiple identifications into a single entity” (p. 1591). For the scholar identity to be included in these roles or identity configurations “educators must recognize the importance of developing and nurturing a scholar identity in this student population” (Whiting, 2006, p. 227). Educators must take care to teach the facets of scholar identity to all students paying special attention to those students who do not innately pick up on or readily express their emerging scholar identity. “Educators should, we believe, encourage students to see the adoption of academic discourse as a component of code-switching rather than as a rejection of other forms of communication” (White & Lowenthal, 2011, p. 302). So, as we seek to build students’ comprehension that developing scholarly discourse is an additive process so must the scholarly identity be poised and experienced as an additive process. However, we approach this specific manifestation of identity, the process of “developing a scholar identity should begin as early as possible and our efforts must be ongoing; becoming a scholar is a lifelong process” (Whiting, 2006, p. 223).

**Defining Success**

*Creo En Mi: Lo Mejor Está Por Llegar (Natalia Jimenez)*

*I believe in me: The best is yet to come*

Measuring and defining success depends first on who is crafting the definition: the learner or others. External measures of success often fall to scores on nationally-normed assessments mandated to ensure accountability. The public messaging of the urgent need for
accountability and that accountability hanging on test scores becomes one way the public measures success.

The escalating demand for accountability in the U.S. public education system has given rise to a proliferation of "high-stakes" tests as the primary means of individual and system assessment. These tests are labeled high-stakes because the scores are directly tied to issues of consequence, such as individual promotion or graduation, or monetary allotments to schools or systems (Holman, 1995), contrasting with earlier use to identify gaps in learning, but not for reward or punishment. (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 5) Assessments such as state-wide assessments and end of course assessments in addition to the ACT, SAT, IB and Advanced Placement assessments are popular measures for assessing success in schools by the public and legislatures. “Cumulatively, test scores infer and affect academic achievement. This, coupled with the general expectation for students to acculturate to school norms, illustrates the potential breadth of discrimination in the nation's educational system” (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 8). To these ends, high-stakes tests allow schools to “simultaneously accomplish the fundamentally contradictory goals of reproducing, the social and material relations of capitalist production while hegemonically working to win the ‘spontaneous consent’ of the students/staff through appeals to individual equality within the educational and social meritocracy (Apple, 1995)” (Au, 2009, p. 13). Considering the flaws in standardized testing, it is important to also acknowledge that academic success means different things to different people. “Ambiguity associated with the definition of academic success is partially attributed to its inherently perspectival nature” (York et al., 2015, p. 3). York et al. (2015) review Kuhl, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek’s definition of student success. They cited “student success is defined as academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment
of educational outcomes, and post-college performance (p. 5)” (p. 2). Student’s however may have a different view of what success means to them.

Albert Bandura’s (1977) “seminal theory reports that the role of self-efficacy, including one’s self-image as a learner in the context of academic achievement, cannot be ignored or trivialized” (Whiting, 2006, p. 224). Self-efficacy is a key to academic achievement. “Academic self-concept is considered a broad construct, reflecting both descriptive and evaluative aspects of the self” (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 8). They go on to suggest that academic self-concept includes the student’s description of their own strengths and weaknesses both on specific topics as well as an overall assessment of their competencies in an academic domain. In considering “the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement is generally reciprocal (Marsh, 1990 as cited by Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p.9). Altshuler & Schmautz (2006) student academic self-concept becomes critical to success. This is a problematic position considering many minority students do not see themselves in the contexts of standardized tests and may have to acculturate, leaving their native heritage behind to leverage the majority’s way of doing things in order to achieve.

Belief in one's self and ability is also dependent an overall "vision" of being successful. Our society does not currently embrace successful Hispanic role models or a belief in successful Hispanic educational performance on tests. Without these visions and beliefs, Hispanic students have little support in the surrounding environment to contribute to their vision. (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 9)

Gilman Whiting (2006) supported the role of self-efficacy in academic self-concept and achievement. Whiting went on to explain:

gifted minorities appear to share a few characteristics: (a) high resilience, (b) high self-confidence, (c) high self-control, (d) a strong sense of self-responsibility, and (e) a clear
understanding of the task at hand and the belief that they can accomplish all the subtasks of the intended goal. They believe they are strong students. They are not deterred by challenges or setbacks because they are optimistic; they even seek out academic challenges, and thrive when educators hold high expectations for them. (p. 224)

What is important to take away from this is how students reconcile their ethnic identity with their academic identity. Therefore, we must attend to “how minority students structure and manage emerging tensions as they construct and negotiate ethnic and academic identities in the course of their everyday activities” (Nasir & Saxe, 2003, p. 1). Students define success as meeting their goals, whatever their goals may be. To meet their goals, Whiting continues to unravel the motivations of minority scholars. Minority scholars leverage skills including understanding how some sacrifices are necessary to reach many worthy goals and objectives (Whiting, 2006). Their need for achievement is stronger than the need for affiliation. “These students set realistic goals— they recognize and appreciate the importance of high grades, excellent school attendance, and the benefits of taking challenging courses (e.g., AP, IB and honors classes) in order to reach their goals” (Whiting, 2006, p. 226). These teen scholars are confident. “They refuse to be restricted by social injustices based on gender, socioeconomic status, and race or ethnicity. They refuse to give in to low expectations and will work diligently to change such expectations” (Whiting, 2006, p 226). For minority boys to manifest the afore mentioned characteristics and achieve academic success is a counternarrative.

**Student Voice and Counternarratives**

*Vivir Mi Vida: “Siempre Pa'lante, No Mires Pa'trás” (Marc Anthony)*

*Live my life: “Always moving forward, don’t look back”*

Students are regularly silenced by the mandates of the schools. Driven by standardized tests as measures of learning and predictors of success these sterile measures do little to engage
students in the real work of schooling. Particularly for urban and minority students, threats for a future that was anything but guaranteed do little to motivate much less inspire. Christopher Emdin (2016) explained “if one feels like what they have to say is of value in a particular place, they are more apt to transform the place into a community and partake in activities that are valued within it” (p. 59).

Voice and agency are not new concepts to education. In the 1970s, Paolo Freire explained "the only effective instrument in a humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed” (p. 68). Angela Valenzuela draws in the relationship that enables voice writing about authentic caring in relationships between teachers and Latinx students.

Valenzuela (1999) explained “students argue that they should be assessed, valued, and engaged as whole people…they prefer a model of schooling premised on respectful caring relations… that parallels the Mexican concept of educación” (p. 61). Many avenues for social change and empowerment of minority youth can be found. Many avenues to reach a common end: equitable opportunity for black and brown children. All these approaches however center on the importance of student voice. Empowering students to develop and use their voices will move the agenda forward but to do this we need actionable strategies to create these opportunities. “When teachers engage in dialogues with students that privilege their unique voices, the students feel validated for who they are rather than who the teacher expects them to be” (Emdin, 2016, p. 67).

Creating space for the voices of members of oppressed groups in high school to capture and document their perspectives regarding examining their ethnic identity development in the 21st century and the insights these students can provide on their experience could provide access to real change. Documenting these stories to affirm and restore cultural pride can begin to impact
change. Delgado and Staples (2007) explained “social identities that are affirming and restore cultural pride wield great influence on how urban youth view themselves, their families, and their communities” (p. 372). To these ends, engaging high school Latinx boys in the work is essential to bring their experiences and voices to the forefront. As teens develop in an ever-flattening world, their perceptions of their ethnic development may be very different from those who are significantly older or significantly younger than them. Researchers make space for these stories through capturing counternarratives.

Using counternarratives, we draw upon Critical Race Theory to challenge deficit perspectives of low-income minority youth. This work has benefitted from Freire’s (1970) argument that critical reflection not only leads to discovery and action, but ideally to the social transformation of inequality through counternarratives. (Burke & Greene, 2015)

Creating space for othered groups to document their ethnic identity development can shed light and provide insights into the process through their own eyes. At the same time these insights by participants challenge the master narrative or stereotypes commonly attributed to the othered group. The life history research approach provides a link between personal and social worlds with a strong focus on personal history so that it highlights prejudice, misplaced norms and assumptions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Lilia Fernández (2002) explained:

for CRT and LatCrit scholars, storytelling or narrative serves several important methodological functions and benefits the person of color in a number of ways. First, it allows the participant to reflect on his or her lived experience. Second, narrative allows the marginalized participant to speak or make public his or her story. This of course happens within a mediated setting and usually within, although not limited to, a particular arena—the academy. Third, storytelling or counter-storytelling also subverts the
dominant story or the reality that is socially constructed by Whites (Delgado, 1995). By offering an alternative to the master narrative (Ladson-Billings, 1998), it places the truthfulness and “objectivity” of that narrative in question. Finally, storytelling can also be transformative and empowering. (p. 48)

Counter-storytelling may be the most widely-used CRT method, first used by critical race legal scholars such as Derrick Bell in Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism (1992) and Richard Delgado’s Rodrigo’s Chronicles (1995). In 2000, Daniel Solorzano and Tara Yosso brought counter-storytelling to the field of education in their book chapter, Toward a Critical Race Theory of Chicana and Chicano Education. Several years later, Yosso (2006) published the first book of critical race counterstories in education titled, Critical Race Counterstories Along the Chicana and Chicano Educational Pipeline (Perez Huber, 2008, p. 166).

A version of counter-storytelling that has emerged from the Latcrit movement is the testimonio. It is important to note there is no one definition of a testimonio nor are there requirements for using it. The most famous testimonio to date is, I, Rigoberta Menchu. In I, Rigoberta Menchu, the researcher, or transcriber, documents the story of the narrator who describes her/his life events. A testimonio is seen as a challenge to traditional Eurocentric research methods. “Referencing the work of Delgado Bernal & Villalpando (2002), testimonio as a research method can be seen as a direct challenge to dominant epistemology, as what should constitute valid research and research processes” (Perez Huber, 2008, p. 170). Perez Huber (2009) saw five areas of overlap in which testimonies were used across disciplines and time. These five areas are “(1) revealing injustices caused by oppression; (2) challenging dominant Eurocentric ideologies; (3) validating experiential knowledge; (4) acknowledging the power of human collectivity; and (5) commitment to racial and social justice” (p. 645). Reyes and
Rodríguez (2012) explained “the collective goal of testimonio is to name oppression, any type of institutionalized marginalization. It requires active participatory readers or listeners who act on behalf of the speaker in an effort to arrive at justice and redemption” (p. 527). Burciaga and Navarro connect testimonios to Paolo Freire’s work. Another commonality that Photovoice and testimonios share, Burciaga and Navarro (2015) pointed out that “Paulo Freire’s (1970/1998) concept of conscientizça—-or the process of identifying and taking action against social injustice—requires self-reflection for social transformation” (p. 1). This is the same process that occurs in the reflection process of Photovoice and in developing a testimonio. “Fundamentally, however, the objective of testimonio includes the knowledge that reflection and speaking lead, eventually, to liberation. Testimonios often serve as awakenings for tellers and readers alike” (Reyes & Rodríguez, 2015, p. 528).

Success as a Counternarrative

Me Niego: “No Puedo Asimilar” (Reik)

I refuse: “I can’t assimilate”

The establishment of a scholar identity requires for students to be validated in academic pursuits. This validation is not easily obtained and emerges through the development of academic invulnerability. This academic invulnerability poises minority students in a powerful position for achievement otherwise denied them. According to Alva (1995):

Academically invulnerable students can be described as those who sustain high levels of achievement, motivation and performance, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly in school and, ultimately, dropping out of school. (p. 19)

Arellano & Padilla (1996) suggested that “it is the interaction between sociocultural, personal, and environmental factors that determines Latinx academic success or failure” (p. 487).
Patrón & Garcia (2016) found student “that underwent a series of challenging events, were involved in activities and programs that supported their education, surrounded themselves with people who were invested in their educational aspirations, and found motivation under oppressive circumstances” (p. 540).

According to Mirza and Arif (2018), research describing the role of protective factors shows that factors such as a:

child’s self-confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, internal locus of control, sense of humor, autonomy and optimism, along with a child’s warm and open relationship with the teacher, a positive peer group, and high-quality child care at an early age, often serve to mitigate the potentially harmful negative outcomes related to risk factors that are present in that child or in his/her environment (Lewis, 2000). (p. 34)

Morales (2018) cited Crisp, Taggart, and Nora’s (2014) meta-analysis literature regarding factors that contribute to Latinx students’ success. They focus on nine key factors to success: including (a) sociocultural characteristics; (b) academic self-confidence; (c) beliefs, ethnic identity, and coping styles; (d) precollege academic experiences; (e) college experiences; (f) internal motivation and commitment; (g) interactions with supportive individuals; (h) perceptions of the campus climate/environment; and (i) institutional characteristics. (p. 7)

Alva (1995) also cited positive self-evaluation, a sense of control over their academic success and failure, a supportive network of family members, friends, neighbors, and teachers serve as protective resources for students. Arellano and Padilla (1996) cited the student's beliefs, values, and attitudes toward education; the quality of their student-teacher interactions; positive school experiences, the powerful effect of parental influence, and positive personal and social identity as reasons for success despite the odds. Flores-Gonzalez (2002) found seven factors that
develop and maintain a school kid identity including: “1. Social appropriateness of the role; 2. Social support; 3. Prestige and awards; 4. Extensive and intensive relationships; 5. Role performance; 6. The presence of identity-enhancing or identity-threatening events and 7. Possible selves” (p. 12). Many researchers have documented success among minority youth despite the myriad of obstacles and academic landmines and hypothesize why these students have succeeded. “Study after study demonstrates that classrooms, schools, and other educational spaces that are rooted in a commitment to dialoguing between students, teachers, and other students are quite promising” (Rodríguez, & Oseguera, 2015, p. 135).

In 1846 the new Americans shut down all of Mexico’s ports until they signed the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. The treaty pledged the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States, according to the principles of the Constitution to all new citizens. Today in 2021 we are witness to a political climate that demonizes the non-white majority, as evidenced by the plans to build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico, the ripping of immigrant parents from their children, and showering asylum seekers with tear gas. To these ends, we find ourselves in the present-day American South. Here, Latinx populations are surging nonetheless while millions of Latinx students continue to be failed by academic institutions designed to serve them at perhaps a most critical point of the identity development process. As ethnic groups blend and lines between groups blur, what is the nature of ethnic and scholar identity for high achieving high school Latinx students, who identify as a boy, in a southern context?
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

If we are to liberate Latinx students from the hegemony of U.S. schooling, we must value their voice. If we are to value their voice, we must leverage available platforms to hear these voices, regardless of how uncomfortable it might be. I am advocating for a respectful sharing of viewpoints and perspectives unique to our Latinx students. Emdin (2016) explained “if one feels like what they have to say is of value in a particular place, they are more apt to transform the place into a community and partake in activities that are valued within it” (p. 59). Students are regularly silenced by school mandates like standardized tests. Driven by standardized tests as measures of learning and predictors of success, these sterile measures do little to engage students in the real work of schooling, particularly for urban and minority students.

Voice and agency are not new concepts in education, however. Bakhtin was one of the early researchers in regard to voice and agency.

For Bakhtin, the danger with theory is that it leads our thinking towards theoretical concerns rather than practical or experiential concerns. Bakhtin starts with experience rather than theory when the emotions, feelings, and values of particular people are central to inquiry. (McCarthy et al., 2006, p. 423)

In the 1970s, Freire explained to us that “the only effective instrument in a humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed” (p. 68). Valenzuela draws in the relationship that enables voice writing about authentic caring in relationships between teachers and Latinx students. Valenzuela (1999) explained “students argue that they should be assessed, valued, and engaged as whole people…they prefer a model of schooling premised on respectful caring relations… that parallels the Mexican concept of educación” (p. 61). Many avenues for social change and empowerment of minority youth can be found. Many avenues to reach a common end: equitable opportunity for
black and brown children. All these approaches however center on the importance of student voice. Empowering students to develop and use their voices will move the agenda forward but to do this we need actionable strategies to create these opportunities. “When teachers engage in dialogues with students that privilege their unique voices, the students feel validated for who they are rather than who the teacher expects them to be” (Emdin, 2016, p. 67).

Providing space for engaged, high school, Latinx boys’ voices is essential to bring their real experiences to the forefront. As teens develop in an overconnected world, their perceptions of their ethnic development may be very different from those who are significantly older or significantly younger than them. Their involvement at the core of this work will be essential to capturing their true perception and subsequent analysis and is the catalyst for the methods used in this study. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of ethnic and scholar identity for high achieving high school Latinx students, who identify as a boy, in a southern context?

2. How do high-performing high school Latinx boys view the connections between their identities?

This chapter includes information about research design, participants, setting, data collection and procedures, and data analysis. The resources used for this review of literature were research articles obtained from the University of Memphis’s online library database. Articles were specifically identified through the university’s multi-search, multidisciplinary databases. The databases include ERIC, EBSCOhost, JSTOR, and Lexis-Nexis. All articles were published in scholarly journals and were peer-reviewed. Additionally, scholarly books that supported Latinx growth, identity, photovoice, critical race theory and Latcrit theory assisted in the facilitation of this work. These books were obtained from commercial vendors such as Amazon, Barnes and Noble, or free online versions and excerpts from Google books.
Research Design

This study is designed to highlight academically successful high school students who identify as Latinx and as boys. The goal of this study was to leverage platforms for the voices of high-achieving, high school, Latinx students who identify as a boy; to capture and document their perspectives regarding their ethnic and scholar identity in the 21st century; and to lean into the insights these students provided on their experience. Living in today’s society, it is feasible that there may be a need to restore cultural pride. Emanating from the work of Delgado and Staples (2007) this study aimed to validate cultural pride and elevate it if desired and necessary. To this end, they say:

Social identities that are affirming and restore cultural pride wield great influence on how urban youth view themselves, their families, and their communities. A counter-narrative is essential to undo the harm that has been perpetuated by a society that is adultist, sexist, racist ableist and classist. (p. 32)

Bringing these experiences and voices to the forefront would have been impossible without engaging participants in the work. Their involvement at the core of this work was essential to capturing true perceptions and subsequent analysis, and was the catalyst for the methods used in this study.

Methodology
This study was epistemologically grounded in constructionism and more specifically, social constructionist theory. Stemming from the idea that “constructionism proposes that each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive processes while social constructionism had a social rather than an individual focus (Young & Colin, 2004)” (Andrews, 2012, p. 1). Social constructionist theory grew out of Austrian-American and German sociologists in the mid-1900s (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Social constructionists “focus on shared knowledge that is developed through interaction. Key beliefs include: researchers should focus on how knowledge develops as a social construction and research centers on dialogue and negotiation” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 21). Social constructionism is well-paired with this research because both “explore the way in which people and society construct meaning in particular areas of interest”, individuality in this context, “in order to illustrate how reality is constructed” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 29). When the focus is on black and brown bodies, the social constructionist theory manifests differently than when applied to the white majority. To illuminate the stories of minorities, critical race theory provides a platform from which these stories can be told and power shift (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Critical race theory (CRT) purports that race is a social construction created to differentiate racial groups and to show the superiority or dominance of one race over the other. CRT began with legal scholars, lawyers and activists who thought the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s had stalled and was perhaps backsliding in the 1970s (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Derrick Bell, often credited as a father of the movement “questioned the basic assumptions of the law’s treatment of people of color in leading law reviews” (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xi). Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado contributed essential work to the foundation of the movement. CRT includes many authors of multiple ethnicities including those of color in addition to those in the majority ethnic groups. While CRT began as a law movement it is used in many other
disciplines today including education. In education, CRT manifests as critical race pedagogy which has at least five elements according to Solorzano and Yosso (2001). These elements include:

1. the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism;
2. the challenge to dominant ideology;
3. the commitment to social justice;
4. the importance of experiential knowledge;
5. the use of interdisciplinary perspectives.

(Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 472).

The centrality and intersectionality of race however seems to focus on the black-white binary (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Bonilla-Silva (2014) explained that “most whites assert that they don’t see any color, just people” (p. 17). This color “blindness” allows the focus of race discussions to thrive in the black-white binary. Thinking the color blindness absolves whites of responsibility for racially motivated thoughts, actions and reactions allow racism to survive and thrive (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). It also however pushes everyone not included in the black-white binary to the periphery and allows them to be ignored or forgotten (Bonilla-Silva, 2014).

Perceptions are affected by any number of influences including media, other people’s opinions, input from trusted individuals in their lives as well as more nuanced and covert input of which we are not aware or forgotten (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Our ignorance and/or mindlessness of its presence and the resulting effect of covert bias ensures the livelihood of the master narrative and power bloc. These judgements are experienced in many contexts: at work, in the community and in school. Despite these influences and judgements there are Latinx boys who achieve success despite having to navigate the entanglement of white privilege. Examining the role of white privilege is not only of note in the black-white binary but for a wide array of others who experience racial subordination in their own unique ways. Critical race theory pertains to all people of color. This narrow view of the black-white binary is the reason that movements such as
the LatCrit experiment have come to the forefront and are dedicated to examining how Latinx people experience hegemony and white racial oppression.

LatCrit is not in competition with or a substitution to CRT. It provides specificity and voice to the experience of the Latinx community as a counter narrative to the black-white binary. The Latinx community is encouraged to consider itself white and therefore should identify with whiteness but they are not. Instead of a binary it should be viewed as the White – Non-white/Black experience. The non-white experience lived by the Latinx community is apparent not only in the array of colors of skin but moreover in their language, culture, origin, and status of citizenship. The LatCrit movement, according to Bernal (2002) has the same five defining elements as CRT including:

(1) The importance of transdisciplinary approaches; (2) An emphasis on experiential knowledge; (3) A challenge to dominant ideologies; (4) The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination and (5) A commitment to social justice. (p. 109)

These defining elements drive research, pedagogy and practice with a Latinx focus just as feminism, Asians, Native Americans and other critical theory groups work.

While the movement began as an experiment stemming from a 1995 Latino Legal Issues meeting in Puerto Rico, it formalized in 1996 in La Jolla, CA at the first LatCrit conference. The conference created space for participation by all people of color. The LatCrit conference and resulting research is guided by four standing guideposts (Montoya, 2006) which include:

1) The multidimensionality of Latina/o identity and its relationship to current legal, political and cultural regimes and practices.

2) The salience of the Caribbean region, in understanding how local particularities produce (inter)national patterns of privilege and subordination.
3) Cross-group histories or experiences with law and power, such as those based on the intersections of class, gender, race, sexuality and religion, elucidating intra-Latina/o diversities and contextualizing Latina/o experience within intergroup frameworks and Euro-Heteropatriarchy.

4) Connections or contrasts of LatCrit to other genres of scholarship. (p. 3)

The themes of the LatCrit movement are influenced by a wide array of critical theory professionals including Kimberlé Crenshaw and Mari Matsuda in their work on intersectionality and multiplicity (Valdes, 2009). Anti-essentialism and multi-dimensionality has been guided by the work of Berta Hernandez-Truyol, Darrin Hutchison and Angela Harris while Mari Matsuda and Athena Mutua have contributed to anti-subordination activism (Valdes, 2009). The list of names that have influenced the LatCrit movement are as numerous as are the areas in which those contributions have been made.

LatCrit draws on the strengths outlined in critical race theory, and emphasizes the intersectionality of experience with oppression, and the need to extend conversations about 'race' and racism beyond the Black/White binary. We also encounter the theme of intersectionality in Freire’s work as he pushes us to examine the intersectionality of resistance. (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 38)

Freire’s problem-posing approach is a form of liberation designed to elicit societal change by developing and shifting people of color toward critical consciousness (Freire, 1996). Freire attempts to expose claims of neutrality as a facade built by dominant groups to protect the underlying self-interest, power, and privilege like the work of CRT. In Freire’s problem-posing approach, students are active agents in the knowledge construction process (Freire, 1996). Through this approach, a platform is created for student voice and interaction. Therefore, he honors the students for the complex cultural beings they are and for their contributions to the
knowledge construction process as a direct contradiction to the current “banking” model schools implement (Freire, 1996). Freire advocated for a co-construction process where teachers and students worked together to learn and grow academically. More recently, Valenzuela championed the idea of “additive schooling”. From Freire’s problem-posing approach many other researchers have offered opportunities for students to be active agents in the knowledge construction process. These researchers include Valenzuela and her theory of additive schooling. Additive schools are a system of schooling focused on equalizing opportunity and assimilating students into the larger world, through a bicultural process (Valenzuela, 1999). “In this world, students do not have to choose…This pluralistic model of schooling builds on students’ bicultural experience, which all minority youth bring with them to school” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 269). Tara Yosso adds another option for inclusive education supporting Freire’s problem-posing approach in the modern day and Valenzuela’s approach. Yosso (2005) explored and defined the wealth of cultural capital students bring to school despite the mainstream methods designed to prevent the recognition of this cultural capital and continue to apply the standard white middle-class culture.

Using CRT, Yosso developed a mestizaje theory with new tenets that apply to those who are left out of the mainstream tenets (Yosso, 2005). These new tenets include aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital. Yosso’s strength in applying CRT to examining cultural capital brings those who are traditionally excluded and silenced in academic research to the forefront and gives them voice, yielding power to the cultural experiences of communities of color to change the dialogue (Yosso, 2005). Freire, Valenzuela, and Yosso all focus on naming the world, and the importance of helping minorities find their voice. This leads me to posit when members of oppressed groups find their voice, they share their stories and power can shift.
Taking CRT and Latcrit into account leads me to wonder how minority teens experience social identity development. To restate the central idea of social identity theory, “individuals construct social meaning and their own shared realities through interacting with each other” (Gergen and Gergen, 1991 as cited by Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 25). Teens of all ethnicities are in the beginning stages of active identity construction as they struggle with concepts of self in a time when peer acceptance is most highly desired. Social constructionism, especially in the current anti-immigrant political environment, poises the identity development process accurately as affected by the social realities with which students contend. For these reasons, I coin the term critical social identity theory. The degree to which social experiences affect identity is a deeply sensitive and individualized process that will differ from person to person, but groups will have similar experiences. The experiences of minorities are often distinctly different from white majority in this country and especially within the current divisive political climate. It is through this study that I aim to provide a platform to highlight some of these voices.

Methods

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Participatory Action Research (PAR) refers to a group of research strategies that align researchers and participants and co-creators of research. Originating from the work of Kurt Lewin, the founder of action research who believed “that people would be more motivated about their work if they were involved in the decision-making about how the workplace was run (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p. 36)” (MacDonald, 2012, p. 36). PAR can also be said to have roots in Paolo Freire’s belief in critical reflection and its role in personal and social change (MacDonald, 2012). Emanating from Freire’s work emboldening destitute communities to examine and analyze the structural reasons for their oppression, PAR has grown as a
methodology empowering researchers to work in partnership with communities driving their
action for change Baum et al. (2006) who defined it as:

PAR seeks to understand and improve the world by changing it. At its heart is collective,
self-reflective inquiry that researchers and participants undertake, so they can understand
and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they
find themselves. The reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by
understanding of history, culture, and local context and embedded in social relationships
(p. 854).

While action research is often conducted with adults, it can also be conducted with adolescents.
When a researcher engages in a PAR study with adolescents, it is often referred to as youth
participatory action research or YPAR in brief.

Melanie Bertrand (2018), explained YPAR as an approach to research in the following
manner:

students partner with adults to study the local manifestations of systemic racism and other
forms of oppression…. Students act to address problems and improve the everyday
experiences of Students of Color (Irizarry & Welton, 2014; Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell,
2015; Rodríguez & Brown, 2009). (p. 368)

It is a goal of YPAR to position students as researchers, activists, advocates, and leaders
(Bertrand, 2018). Cammarota and Fine (2008) succinctly explain YPAR as “a formal resistance
that leads to transformation -systematic and institutional change to promote social justice” (p. 2).
Cammarota and Fine (2008) go on to explain that YPAR is different from PAR because it is
“explicitly educational with implications for education and youth development” (p. 6). Building
from Freire’s notion of praxis (critical reflection and action), students study social contexts to
understand that life is malleable and subject to change. Most importantly, students should come
to the realization they “possess the agency to produce changes; inspire profound education, and development outcomes” (Carramota & Fine, 2008, p. 6). For the purpose of this study, I focused on a specific form of participatory action research, known as photovoice, with the adolescents who collaborated.

**Urban Teen PhotoVoice**

It is necessary to acknowledge that working with urban teens requires some procedures that deviate from traditional PhotoVoice and Youth Participatory Action Research studies. YPAR studies often appear to be completed in groups on student perceptions of external processes. Photovoice also focuses on working in groups to effect social change. Working with urban teens regarding their personal views of their identity is a deeply personal process that may be severely hindered by (a) making those thoughts public to a group of their peers; (b) the relationship or lack thereof with said teens; and (c) fear of judgement.

Traditional PhotoVoice studies often encourage including a photographer to host a brief session on photography basics, to share tips and tricks for taking photos with mobile devices, how to frame shots and how to consider the perspective captured. Wang and Burris did this in their Photovoice study with adult women in a Chinese village (Wang, 1999). With the profuse access to and use of electronic devices today, a photography workshop does not seem to be necessary for a Teen Urban PhotoVoice Study. Primarily, participants were most likely very familiar, if not expert, with the actual mechanics of how to take a photograph with their mobile device. Secondly and more importantly adding any instruction could have interfered with the data collection of their perspectives or create an ideal of what they “should” capture thereby corrupting results.

A facet of Photovoice, following Latz’s suggestion (2017), was to develop sample prompts/contexts to begin the discussion in the meeting, and then the prompts would have been
discussed and finalized with participants. Some prompts may have been added, others collapsed into one another, some deleted, and others accepted. The prompts were supposed to support the participants as they returned to their daily lives and needed a reminder of the study focus when in the context they wanted to capture. I wanted to assure that the life experiences of urban teens, was protected and not influenced by my conceptions or perspectives. For this Urban Teen PhotoVoice study, I followed Christopher Emdin’s (2017) reality pedagogy approach. “Reality pedagogy functions to develop students’ consciousness about the sociopolitical factors that impact the teaching and learning process” (Taher et al., 2017, p.1). Reality pedagogy requires educators to recognize each student, where they are from, and the culture with which they identify. This practice is implemented to avoid a specific form of epistemic injustice called testimonial injustice by neutralizing agential power being attributed to roles (Fricker, 2007). Fricker explained “power is socially situated … any operation of power is dependent of the context of a social functioning world” (p. 11). To these ends, teens were asked to capture their responses to: “How do you identify ethnically and scholarly?” in photographs leaving space for the photographs’ composition, framing, and perspective as viable avenues through which the teens can communicate their perspective.

Another major component of traditional Photovoice studies in the focus group. Latz (2017) explained “Photovoice involves participants discussing the images they produced and by doing so they gave meaning to and interpreted their photographs. It is not the researcher’s role to interpret the photographs” (p. 74). The focus group is typically used to create synergy between participants and thereby “generate data not possible through the use of discrete interviews” (Latz, 2017, p. 83). While the same data may not be generated in a semi-structured interview as a focus group, the key to this study was creating a safe space for participants to truthfully describe how they identify both ethnically and as a scholar. The broad range of possible responses combined
with fear of judgement could have interfered with data collection. Therefore, due to the sensitive nature of this study, focus groups were not conducted to protect their identities. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to narrate their photographs and negotiate meaning, begin analysis, and allowed themes to surface while protecting the teens privacy. I used bracketing to keep my perspectives separate from the participants’ insights. “‘Bracketing’ requires researchers to set aside personal theories, research presuppositions, inherent knowledge, and assumptions as separate from what is observed in the research process” (Creswell, 2007, p. 112).

The goals of this study did not differ from the goals of a traditional photovoice study. It still provided a platform for the testimonio of each of the participants. It empowered participants to tell their stories in their words. Participants still captured photos to represent their ethnic and scholarly identities. Member checking occurred in place of the focus group. The methods by which I sought to achieve these goals differed to protect teens’ identity and to create space for honest and candid analysis and conversation that would not be possible in a group setting.

In this Urban Teen PhotoVoice study, participants selected a pseudonym first and foremost. Each interview was completed individually. Protecting the boys identity was of the utmost importance and therefore, there were not any interactions between the participants. Participants captured photos and used these photos as a starting point for their interview. While the boys may have captured several photos, they were asked to select the best representation of their ethnic and scholarly identities. This process of selecting the “best” representation caused participants to reflect and assisted in developing critical consciousness. This reflection was important for the boys confidence in telling their stories. Each of the interviews began with the photo they selected that represented their ethnic identity. Next, we explored their scholarly identity and finally any perceived interactions between the two. As each interview unraveled, the boys relaxed and became more confident in telling their stories. Once the interviews were
complete, each interview was transcribed by a third party. I reviewed each transcript with the recording three times to ensure accuracy of the transcription. Finally, I used the transcripts to create a comic for each boy. The comics were shared with each boy for their feedback. Each boy was asked to provide feedback on both the design and the content of the comic, ensuring accuracy in how each boy is represented. Upon reviewing their comic, each boy was so excited they all tried to recruit friends for the study. They were eager to share their experiences with friends and their families. One of the boys used it as a platform to speak with his teacher about his perspective. All of the boys seemed to be more confident and willing to share their experiences and perspectives with a wider audience.

**Research Setting**

The setting of this study occurred in an urban south-eastern city with one of the fastest growing populations of Latinx’s in the country (Frey, 2018). Latinx boys who are high-achieving high school students were selected for this study. These students attended a public high school in one of the top 25 largest districts in the country. At the time of this study, this district serves, approximately 112,000 students in Pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grade. Of the 112,000 students, 74% identify as African-American, 14% Latinx, 7% white, 2% multiple races, 1% Asian and fewer than 1% Native American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or unclassified. 51% of the students are classified as boys and 49% female. According to the published 2018-19 school budget, underrepresented minorities are reported to comprise 92.5% of district enrollment with 12.3% classified as English Language Learners. 58.4% of students meet the federal requirements for economically disadvantaged status. The average district ACT score is 17.8 out of 36 and the graduation rate is reported to be 79.6%.

Thirteen percent of students enrolled in at least on AP course, in grades 9-12 in this district, self-identify as Latinx. 11% of the total high school population in the district were
Latinx and enrolled in at least one AP course. It should be noted that according to the College Board website, only three courses are recommended for ninth and tenth grade students. These courses include AP Human Geography, AP World History, and AP Computer Science Principles. Therefore, there are many more students than courses in ninth and tenth grades as compared to eleventh and twelfth grades. Economically Disadvantaged students have increased in enrollment with support the district reports putting in place including covering required exam fees, tutoring, help sessions, and specialized materials and equipment. In addition to Advanced Placement courses in high schools, Dual Enrollment courses are another option and point of access to advanced coursework. All district-managed traditional high schools offer advanced course options. The district reports 36% of high schools offer one to twenty advanced course options, 29% offer 21 to 40 advanced courses and 22% offer 41 or more advanced courses. The highest number of advanced courses offered by a high school in this district is 145 courses. The district has three high schools certified as International Baccalaureate schools. Enrollment information of these three programs and the ethnic distribution of these programs were not included nor was data included on participation or ethnic distribution of participation for dual enrollment courses in the district.

The district funded 46 magnet schools and programs for the 2020-21 school year. These programs enrolled 35,000 students total. Twelve of these schools/programs served students in grades 9-12. The average ACT composite score was 23.8 for high school students in magnet programs and students had access to 32 of 38 available Advanced Placement courses offered. 100% of students enrolled in a magnet program for four years graduate. No ethnic nor demographic data was provided for students enrolling in magnet programs nor was enrollment subdivided by grade level or program. The data evidenced that students in magnet programs
outperform the district averages and appear to have increased access to advanced course offerings.

For this study, all the students attended high schools in the district and all of which were enrolled in magnet programs. All magnet programs in the district have individual enrollment requirements. Students who participated in this study included students who qualified to enter a competitive magnet program scoring at least at the 70th percentile in reading and math on a nationally-normed test, have required grades, conduct and attendance. Magnet programs do not have attendance zones, nor do they provide transportation; therefore, these students may or may not live in the neighborhood of the school. Students must maintain eligibility throughout their tenure in the program and apply to renew their magnet status annually. This study was comprised of three performing Latinx students who identify as boys who were enrolled in a local public high school magnet program.

**Participant Identification and Selection**

The criteria participants needed to be included are (1) must identify as Latinx, (2) identify as a boy, (3) be high performing, as designated by qualifying for enrollment in a local magnet program and (4) attend an urban, public school in a city noted for rapid Latinx growth in the southeast.

![Participant Selection Criteria](image-url)

Figure 2: Participant Selection Criteria
Latinx

There are an estimated 58.9 million Hispanic people in the United States, comprising 18.1% of the population. By 2050, Hispanics are projected to comprise 30% of the U.S. population (Frey, 2018). As the population surges, however, the Hispanic dropout rate remains higher than that of blacks, whites, and Asians. Therefore, focusing on Latinx students who are successful despite the bleak outlook provided by statistics, was key in this study.

Identify as a boy

Latinx students who identify as boys comprise the most at-risk group for dropping out of school and the gap between boys and girls is the widest for the Latinx ethnic group according to NCES fast facts (2017). For these reasons, focusing on boys in this study was critical to identify the strategies and activities that have helped these students achieve successful despite the struggles of their peers. It also provided critical insights for developing and supporting future Latinx boys.

High Performing

For the purposes of this study, participants met the published entrance requirements of a local magnet program. High school magnet program entrance requirements include grades, conduct, attendance, and nationally normed test scores. According to Kotok (2017) since NCLB was passed, White and Asian students continue to outperform African American and Latinx students in math. “Exclusively studying high-achieving students allows us to better understand the complex ecological process in which individual and school-level factors contribute to the opportunity gap for high-ability minority students (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Stewart, 2008a)” (Kotok, 2017, p. 184). It is important to note that these students were enrolled in a magnet program and may or may not be considered gifted. According to the National Association of Gifted Children (2019) “Children with gifts and talents perform – or have the capability to
perform- at higher levels when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment in one or more domains” (para. 1). Magnet programs in this area serve students that perform above the 50th percentile on a nationally normed test and may not be considered gifted.

**Enrolled in High school**

Umana-Taylor, Diversi, and Fine (2002) stated “adolescence is a critical period for identity formation because it is not until this time that individuals have developed the necessary elements (i.e., physiological growth, mental maturation, and social responsibility) to examine their identity (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1994)” (p. 304). This stage of development finds adolescents wrestling with their experiences, who the world tells them to be, and who they want to be. They push boundaries, explore, and develop their self-identity. While they are engaged in this process of identity exploration, it is a pertinent time to capture their perceptions.

**An urban center with a fast-growing Latinx population**

I chose to focus on a population within a city noted for immense growth in Latinx population with signs that it will continue to grow. These locales are cities with immense Latinx growth, and a growth trajectory predicted to continue (Frey, 2018). These locales are known as new destinations. Destinations where the job market provides opportunity in places that are not connected to or geographically near ports of entry or borders (Frey, 2018). These new destinations are developing infrastructure to support the influx of Latinx students and yet there are these examples of young men succeeding despite the labels and often low expectations that surround their performance (U.S Department of Education, 2015).

**Participant Selection**

Hearing the student’s voice on these points of interest served to clarify educator hypotheses of what works and what does not; what supports students need to succeed despite numerous barriers they face; and may inform how educators and schools can support students in
similar circumstances. The three who met the qualifications were considered “good key informants” (Morales, 2018). These students were reflective, thoughtful, and able to communicate effectively with me as described by Morales:

As Mills and Gay (2015) explain, because of the goal of qualitative research is to select participants who can best add to the understanding of the phenomenon under study, purposeful sampling is the key to finding the right students for this study. (p. 67)

Following the perspective of Wright and Counsel (2018) who purposefully describe the students in their work as young black boys in order to focus readers on the fact that they are discussing children. They stated:

we chose not to use “Black males” or “African American males,” to emphasize that we are writing about children…We reject the use of the phrases “Black males” and “African American males,” which are used regularly in the media and in social science research in a way that subconsciously and consciously dehumanize, criminalize, and adultify members of this population as a monolithic group, making them into a clinical statistical category. (p. 4)

In agreement to this perspective, I refered to the Latinx participants in this study as boys in order to humanize and accurately position these young men as they are and not as the statistical categories in which the majority casts them.

Recruitment

I proposed to present at meetings of two citywide educational programs designed to bring teens from around the city together to teach them leadership skills, empower them to improve their neighborhoods, schools, and communities, and prepare them for college. These programs attract a variety of students from across the city. The programs are also focused on developing leadership skills and making their communities a better place therefore, the students engaged in
these programs may be more likely to participate in a research study. Through this brief presentation, I would explain the project, the qualifications for participating and what the project entails. I would distribute an informational flyer (Appendix A) with this information and my contact information as well. During these brief presentations, I could answer any questions the teens may have. Students would volunteer to participate in the study of their own volition by contacting me via one of the available modes of communication listed on the flyer.

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, these programs were not operational for several months and summer programs were suspended. The pandemic caused me to reconsider how to recruit potential participants. I worked with teachers in several local magnet schools to identify potential students. I shared the informational flyer with these contacts who passed them on to their students. These teachers shared my contact information with the students and their information with me.

Once I received their contact information, I immediately emailed each participant and outlined the steps for participating in the study. My initial email to the interested student asked them to affirm they were enrolled in a magnet program and identified as a high-performing Latinx boy. After the boys confirmed, I sent a second email to explain the assent and consent forms that needed to be signed. Assent and consent forms were made available in English and Spanish (See Appendix B & C). I also offered to speak with any of their parents or guardians as needed. It should be noted, I speak Spanish and may interpret during any meeting as necessary. The students then submitted the signed assent forms for the students and consent forms for the parents. Finally, we scheduled a time for a virtual interview.

iGen

Students born between 1995 and 2002 populate the iGeneration (iGen). This is the first generation that does not know life without cell phones. This generation comprises 24% of the
American population (approximately 74 million) differs from Millennials in many ways (Twenge, 2017). iGens are the “most ethnically diverse generation in American history: one in four are Hispanic, and nearly 5% are multiracial” (Twenge, 2017, p. 5).

iGen is different from every previous generation in how its members spend their time, how they behave, their attitudes toward religion, sexuality, and politics. “They socialize in completely new ways, reject once sacred taboos, and want different things from their lives and careers. They are growing up more slowly. They are at the forefront of the largest mental health crisis in decades” (Twenge, 2017, p. 3). Twenge (2017) outlines 10 trends shaping iGens and our future’

1. In No Hurry (the extension of childhood into adolescence), 2. Internet (how much time they spend on their phones), 3. In person no more (the decline of in-person social interaction), 4. Insecure (the sharp rise in mental health issues), 5. Irreligious (the decline in religion), 6. Insulated but not intrinsic (the interest in safety and the decline in civic involvement), 7. Income Insecurity (new attitudes toward work), 8. Indefinite (new attitudes toward sex, relationships, and children), 9. Inclusive (acceptance, equality, and free speech debates), 10. Independent (their political views). iGen is the ideal place to look for trends that will shape our culture in the years to come, as its members are very young but still old enough to express their views and report on their experiences. (p. 3)

iGen seniors spend about 17 hours a day in school/school activities, homework and sleeping and about six hours on some sort of media – often times multitasking (Twenge, 2017, p. 51). The vast amount of time teens spend on their phones and the visual nature of messaging via emojis, gyphs, and photos make the methods of this study even more salient because of the importance of this mode of communication among the iGen.
Data Collection and Procedures

A variety of methods were utilized for this Teen Urban PhotoVoice study: photo elicitation, semi-structured interviews, and member checking through comics. Cook (2017) cited Cresswell (2013) stating, “qualitative researchers engage in multiple forms of data, rather than relying on only one form of method” (p. 48). During recruitment, I collected the assent and consent forms (Appendices C & D), as well as a pseudonym under which I collected all data and reviewed the guidelines for protecting their identity before the study began.

Photo Elicitation.

I shared the expectations for photo elicitation as found on the informational flyer (Appendix A) which outlined the study goals and expectations, situations in which permission may be necessary before photography and what to do in those circumstances. It also instructed participants to be mindful not to include anything in the photographs that could be used to identify the participant and their family in their photos, captions, or reflections. If participants included photographs with identifying information, such as people that cannot be redacted, these photographs were not published to ensure their privacy. Finally, the photo elicitation guide had my contact information to ensure ease of access should they need to contact me.

Since participants were limited to when they could go and with whom they could interact due to the pandemic, participants were asked to capture a minimum of two photographs. One photograph should represent their personal views of their own ethnic identity, and the other their scholarly identity. Students may have taken more than two photographs if they chose but had to decide at a later date which they would like to include or not include, especially if they wanted to demonstrate a combination/juxtaposition of both their ethnic and scholarly identities. Selecting one photo to represent their ethnic identity and one photo to represent their scholarly identity required the student to reflect over the pictures prior to the interviews. This process helped the
participants develop metacognitive skills throughout the process and clarifies what stories they will tell. Since these teens fall into the iGen category, they were asked to use their mobile device to capture the photographs. Using their mobile devices allowed for flexible and spontaneous capture of things, places or events that resonate with the student and due to the portable nature, it reduced limitations that special equipment, locations or times would have previously required.

The use of personal mobile devices like cell phones also made it easier to submit the photographs to a secure Dropbox folder or to text/email them directly to me. Finally using their own device also ensured privacy in the development, transmission, and production of the actual photographs.

Once the participants captured their photos, students emailed the pictures directly to me. I stored all photos in my university drive folder. For the participants who texted or emailed the photographs to me, I uploaded all photographs, to the respective secure university drive folder and deleted the originals from all other methods of submission.

Semi-Structured Interview Series

I developed an interview guide (Appendix D) for each of the planned four interviews. Each interview had a section for three to five questions and space for me to write answers. The interviews series followed a four-part interview protocol recommended by Latz (2017). This included (a) warm up questions, (b) photo elicitation discussion, (c) process questions and (d) confirming or refining demographic information (Latz, 2017). This phase of the process was focused on prompting participants to be storytellers regarding their photographs (Latz, 2017). Four semi-structured interviews were planned for each participant. According to the initial plan, prior to the interviews, participants engaged in photo elicitation. The photo elicitation process occurred over two weeks during which participants capture their photos. Then we began the interview series. Each interview was conducted with each participant to uncover and further refine insights on their photos. The first interview sought to collect information on their ethnic
identity and how it manifested in the photographs. The second interview focused on participants’ scholarly identity and its manifestation in their photographs. The third interview explored the intersectionality of ethnic and scholarly identities. The final interview was for member checking and providing an opportunity to share anything that has come up in the process or anything new they wish to include. For all interactions, participants would select the time and place where they will feel most comfortable discussing their work.

Due to COVID-19, in person interviews were not an option, nor were four interviews. The interview protocol was condensed into one interview with four sections. While the interview process was condensed into one interview, the questions remained the same in the protocol. The questions represented in Appendix D are the actual questions asked in each interview. Participants submitted their photos either before or at the beginning of the interview. The first section of the interview served as a warm-up; the second asked questions regarding their ethnic identity; the third section asked questions about their scholarly identity; and finally, the fourth section asked participants to consider and identify any interaction between their ethnic and scholarly identities. In our warm-up participants selected a pseudonym to protect their identity.

All of the data was coded with this pseudonym and other identifying information was removed from all evidence. Interviews were audio recorded on a digital voice recorder to capture the participants voice and ensure accuracy. After each interview, the audio clips were downloaded from the device, transcribed, and uploaded to my university drive folder to ensure privacy and security. All copies on the device and recorders were destroyed.

**Member Checking**

Upon completion of each session of data collection, I sent the interviews for transcription. After the transcription was complete, I compiled participant answers to the interview questions into a single comprehensive document. I reviewed the photographs, supporting stories, and reflections
to synthesize the data and coding. As a part of the synthesis process, I created a comic on each boy and highlights from his interview. I shared their final comic with each participant as a means of member check checking. Member checking occurred across email due to the COVID pandemic and local shutdowns. I provided time for participants to review their information (1) to be sure everything is included as agreed upon, (2) ensure titles and captions are aligned correctly and finally (3) for accuracy of message. I planned to provide a response sheet to each participant to note what changes, if any, needed to be made and provided final confirmation that all the information was an accurate representation of the photographer’s work, reflection, and analysis. Since this was completed over email, it was not necessary to create a form. In the email, I attached the comic graphics and asked them 1) if there was anything visually, they would want changed to better represent them and 2) if there was anything in the narratives that they would like to edit. I also assured them that I wanted the comic to represent their stories as accurately as possible and welcomed any feedback they had. Each of the boys reacted very positively and were excited by the comic. Two expressed they wanted to share them with their families. No edits were requested. The process helped me identify commonalities and themes across the participants as the comic is identical for each boy.

I created a comic on each participant’s story to identify key points from their interviews. Developing a comic or “storyboarding is a multiliteracy approach that links visual images with the written text, thus allowing students to construct a view of realities” (Love, 2014, p. 54). The creation of a comic for each interview, allowed the development of counternarratives through synthesis of the information participants provided. The comics provided a way for members to check key points from the interview. Each participant received their comic for their review and feedback. Participants responded favorably to their comic. The comics helped me to identify key
messages from their interviews, highlight important messages, and enhanced my understanding of each participant’s experiences.

Figure 3: The Participant’s Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Initial Project Design</th>
<th>Actual Project Design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Recruitment through two city-wide student programs</td>
<td>Recruitment through teachers in magnet programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photo Elicitation</td>
<td>Capture Multiple photos – select the best representation of your ethnic and scholarly identity (Submit 2 photos)</td>
<td>Capture Multiple photos – select the best representation of your ethnic and scholarly identity (Submit 2 photos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Four one-hour interviews</td>
<td>One interview with four segments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transcription</td>
<td>External transcription</td>
<td>External transcription</td>
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<tr>
<td>Member Checking</td>
<td>Member Checking interview</td>
<td>Created comic and shared electronically with participants with two questions for participants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: COVID Changes to Project Design

Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) explained data analysis in qualitative research studies begins with the process of preparing and organizing data for analysis. Data analysis process began with the
analysis of artifacts from the photographs taken by the participants and continued throughout the interviews.

Data analysis procedures consisted of seven stages: (1) organizing the data; (2) immersion in the data; (3) generating categories and themes; (4) coding data; (5) interpreting data through analytic methods; (6) searching for alternative understandings; and (7) writing the transcribed data for presenting the study. (Wiersman & Jurs, 2009 as cited by Cook, 2015, p.48)

Beginning with the interview of the photographs, transcripts from interviews were coded and categorized using qualitative analysis methods (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Lichtman, 2010, 2011 as cited by Cook, 2015, p. 48). I coded and labeled each transcript according to emergent themes. Themes from each transcript were written and color-coded to organize themes.

Litchman’s (2006) three Cs of analysis (codes, categories, and concepts) was utilized to analyze and interpret the qualitative data (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Litchman’s three Cs.

Marilyn Lichtman (2011) outlines six steps for the researcher to analyze the qualitative data which will be employed in this study. These steps are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Analysis Steps</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Steps</strong></td>
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For Step 1, I listened to the recordings and compared the recording with the transcript several times to ensure accuracy of the transcription. Once accuracy was confirmed between the recordings and the transcript, I again reviewed the data, coding the data by examining participant responses to summary ideas. In step 2, I re-examined the data and initial coding of summary ideas. This time I looked at the ideas across the participants by creating a table with four columns. Column one had the summary idea. Columns two through four each contained data from the participants. Each participant’s data was in its own column. Step 3, I developed a list of common categories, from the initial reviews, that appeared across the data. The table enabled this review of information across participants. The common categories that arose aided in the creation of the comic template. I then populated the comic templates with each boy’s information. In step 4, I modified the initial list as necessary by examining it again with renewed perspectives after populating the comic templates with each boys’ information. In step 5, I revised the categories and subcategories as necessary by reviewing the comics. I shared the comics with participants for their feedback. Participants did not desire any edits. Finally, in step 6, I moved from categories to themes. When reviewing the final comics, there were clear themes that arose from the data.
Table 2

Research Questions and Source of Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the nature of ethnic and scholarly identity for high-achieving high school</td>
<td>Photographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx students who identify as a boy in a southern context?</td>
<td>Interviews with the three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collected documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do high-performing high school Latinx students who identify as a boy view the</td>
<td>Interviews with three to five boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connections between identities?</td>
<td>Collected documentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table Two, found above, the data sources are aligned with the research question. These data sources include interview data and photographs submitted by the participants. Photo artifacts that represented the participants’ ethnic and scholarly identities were analyzed according to what the participants said about the photos. Tinkler (2013) outlined this process. He stated the researcher first focuses on six strategies during analysis including: look, contextualize, listen, watch, juxtapose and trace the threads. For this research study, I focused on the following strategies: look, contextualize, listen, watch, and juxtapose (Cook, 2018, p. 52).

- **Look**: I examined the photos as the interviewees presented them and considered how the interviewees spoke about each photo as well as the participant’s rationale for selecting each photograph.

- **Contextualizing photos**: understanding the perspective of the photos through the interviewees’ eyes. This was vital because understanding the perspective of the photos in the interviewees’ lives may have shaped the interviewees’ responses and interpretations.

- **Listen**: actively listen to stories and accounts of the interviewees about the photos. Pay attention to nonverbal cues such as silences, hesitations, fluency, detail, velocity, rhythm and tone (Portelli 1998 as cited by Cook, 2018, p. 52)
• **Watch**: pay careful attention to the participant’s body language as they engage with the photos (Cook, 2018, p. 52)

• **Juxtapose**: a holistic assessment of photos, viewed within a new frame of reference that extends beyond what is simply observable to also embrace impressions, reactions and revelation (Tinkler, 2013, p. 56 as cited by Cook, 2015, p. 52).

**Transcriptions**

The semi-structured interviews were audio recorded. All recordings were also transcribed initially by a third-party service (online). Next transcripts were reviewed several times for accuracy. Creswell (2007) supported this process stating “read the transcripts in their entirety several times [to] immerse yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of an interview as a whole before breaking it into parts” (p. 150). I also reviewed the transcripts from the interviews in order to use open coding as an initial review.

**Confidentiality**

To ensure participant confidentiality, this study was anonymous. All data was stored in my university drive folder. This allowed me to delete all other file versions on my laptop and recording devices representing another action step to protect participant identities. While I may publish results of this study, participants’ names and other identifying information would be kept private.

Upon selection for participation, students signed copies of an assent form and parents signed a hard copy of a consent form with their legal names. Due to covid, original documents were kept by the participant who sent me a scanned or photography of the signed copy. Next, participants selected pseudonyms to maintain their confidentiality. All future data collection will be collected using the pseudonym.
Each interview was audio recorded so I was fully present in the session and could later transcribe and code each meeting with each participant. The audio recording transcription was completed by a third-party transcription service to adhere to the study timelines. The development of the questions included expert feedback to ensure that they will properly elicit answers to the research questions. It is important to note that during the first interaction, participants were instructed to ensure that identifying information was not included in photographs to ensure their anonymity. All the participants submitted photographs of themselves, therefore their faces have been redacted to protect their identity.

Due to COVID-19, in-person and multiple interviews were not feasible. Each participant was interviewed over an hour. Participants selected the most convenient time and virtual meeting option (Zoom). This interview was semi-structured involving predetermined questions to be asked of all participants. Additionally, there were many probing follow up questions to ensure my understanding of the information the participants are seeking to convey. In preparation for the interview, I reviewed the submitted photographs in the university One Note folder. Each interview was recorded on an external voice recorder and uploaded to my university OneNote folder. All other files were deleted. The audio recording was transcribed by a third-party transcription service to adhere to the study timelines. Once the audio recording was transcribed, I reviewed the transcription with the audio recording to ensure accuracy as well as to capture any ambient context captured on the recording. This process was repeated three times to capture narrative on the photographs and the process of their development, ethnic identity, scholarly identity, and any intersectionality between scholar and ethnic identity.

After the interviews had been transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed, I created a comic on each interview. The final step was to share the comic with participants for their feedback. This step served as an opportunity for participants to member check the information in the research
study that applied to them. Participants were extended the opportunity to edit or add to any of the previous information captured to ensure the clarity of their message.

Researchers Positionality

My relationship with high performing boys began 12 years ago. My son, Antonio is mixed (half European American and half Chicano) and was in a Spanish immersion pre-school. While the women who cared for him loved him fiercely, the lady in charge of his care each day was not equipped to keep a gifted boy engaged. Each year he was in the daycare, Antonio learned and matured and inevitably he was moved up to the next age group to keep him challenged. This occurred for three years until he turned four and there were no other age groups ahead of him.

He was a creative, imaginative, smart little boy with boundless energy and a brain that never turned off. While the other students wrote the letter “y” on the front and back of a lined sheet of paper, Antonio rushed through, completed half, and began climbing the bookcases leading to him receiving a frowny face on the behavior tracker and multiple sessions in time out. No need to worry though, time out was a little bench in front of the sink, where he decided to spike his hair in the sink while in time out. He received another frowny face and in fact earned five more before I arrived. When I arrived, he was the talk of the class of four year olds, children were telling everyone who walked into the room things such a “Look! Antonio got FIVE frowny faces;” “Antonio is bad;” “I got a happy face not a frowny face like Antonio”. In those few minutes, as a mother I was crushed. The teacher, exasperated, explained how bad Antonio was and that she couldn’t “deal with him”.

Here he was the minority in the immersion day care. His classmates were mostly white upper middle class to upper class two parent homes. Antonio’s father and I both worked full time and were still together at that point, but were the only Latinx family in the place. I left that night
with Antonio who was sad he has so many frowny faces and “disappointed me”, upset that he had been labeled, and fearful that it would only get worse. At that moment, I did not know he was gifted. In fact, I took him to be tested for gifted pre-kindergarten. A week later, after his testing and attending the results hearing, he tested at the top end of normal on an English test. As the principal and gifted teacher tried to console me because my child was not gifted, I instead explained that he would be as he had never really been in an English-speaking environment except for when he was with my parents on weekends. Being a Spanish teacher and often accused of being “more Mexican than” than my husband who was first generation Chicano, I made Spanish a priority up to this point.

At this point our only option was to continue down this same road or move him to an English only pre-k program as there was only one Spanish Immersion day care in town. Antonio thrived in the new English-speaking environment but he also stopped speaking Spanish. He got to second grade before similar issues arose again even with his enrollment a class for gifted students. We then shifted Antonio to a magnet program for academically talented students. He continued to thrive in enriched and advanced academic magnet programs through the rest of elementary and on to middle schools and now high school. In middle school, he began to study Spanish officially taking Spanish I in seventh grade and Spanish II in eighth grade. As a family I tried to keep the culture alive in our family traditions. We celebrate both mother’s days, we still spoke Spanish to him even though he answered in English, Chorizo and barbacoa were weekend breakfast traditions after visiting the tortillera, the Reyes Magos also brought gifts. TV programs were in Spanish and his Abuelita would visit biannually and make tamales, curar mijo del ojo (cure my son from the evil eye) and a variety of other legends and lore held dear in his father’s family.
Fast forward to freshman year in school, it’s the second week of school, Antonio gets in the car with a somber face. He pauses then turns to me slowly and asks “Am I Latino?”. I was floored but tried to mask my reaction. In my head, I went through a checklist I had fabricated in my head that if I did all the right things my son would own both cultures and identify himself as both Latinx and American. We discussed his question on the one hand, the entire half hour drive home and he popped out of the car satisfied that he had the answers he was looking for. On the other hand, I began to reflect over his life trajectory leading up to that moment. As I went through year books and class photos it suddenly hit me – he had always been the only Latinx in his magnet classes. Now in high school, he had the opportunity to no longer be the only one.

To enter his high school’s college preparatory magnet program, students must score at the 80th percentile in reading and math. The magnet program is also a program within a school and comprises about half of the 2,200 student body. This magnet program is diverse including: Latinxs, Asians, African, Hindi, Middle Eastern, and European exchange students in addition to African-Americans and the whites who make up almost half of the magnet program. At the same time, I was pursuing my doctorate in urban education and researching the inequities of students of color in advanced programs as well as working with the schools that represent the research findings in real life. It became a passion for me. My son will have an advantage because I know the system intimately. I not only work in the system, but I also study the system at the university. So many questions evolved in the light of the critical situation Latinx boys face outlined in research. Much of the research focuses on the failing majority of the Latinx students. But what about those who succeed despite the deck that is clearly stacked against them.

My goal is ultimately to open the path to success for more Latinx and minority students. To help high-performing, high school, Latinx students who identify as boys utilize this platform from which their voice can resound and inform teachers, schools, and leaders. Testimonios, as
counternarratives, will provide insight that the field so desperately needs to better serve Latinx families. Providing space for high-performing, high school, Latinx students who identify as boys to tell their stories of success in a system designed to silence them and relegate them to the fringe.

Chapter 4: Findings/Discussion

The purpose of this urban teen photo-voice study was to understand how three high performing students who identify as boys and Latino identify ethnically and as scholars. Participants were asked to find or capture a photo that represented how they identify ethnically and as scholars. This chapter will give an overview of the interview experiences, differences, and commonalities among the participants and major themes that emerged from the data analysis. The qualitative study addressed the central question, “What are the ethnic and scholarly identities of high performing students who identify as boys and Latinx in a southern context?” The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of ethnic and scholarly identity for high-achieving high school Latinx students who identify as a boy in a southern context?
2. How do high-performing high school Latinx students who identify as a boy view the connections between identities?

Participant’s Profiles

All three participants were currently enrolled in a local magnet program. Entrance into magnet programs required applicants to meet certain grades and attendance requirements in addition to meeting or exceeding minimum cut score thresholds on nationally-normed exams. Due to COVID, each participant completed one zoom interview to ensure safety of all those involved. Each interview was audio recorded, with each recording given a pseudonym for each
participant. No authentic names of the participants were used. They are referred to as P.J., Jay, and Danny throughout this study.

**Participant A: P.J.’s Story and the Power of Perseverance**

P.J. is a confident young man who is mature for his age. He is currently a junior at a local magnet program. P.J. was eager to share his experiences and the message that emanated from P.J.’s story is one of the power of perseverance. Perseverance in P.J.’s story manifests in three ways ethnically, academically, and through connections of the two. Ethnically, P.J. recalls the first time he truly felt his ethnicity and how it affected his sense of self and his roots. He focuses on the perseverance of the Columbian people and the challenges they face as a people and a country. Academically, P.J. recounts his personal experiences with lack of motivation, the sudden shift to virtual school because of the global COVID 19 pandemic, and internal struggle to find motivation to achieve amidst the challenges he faced. Finally, P.J. identifies the need for future programming that supports Hispanic boys who are academically successful to help them persevere. For P.J., perseverance means keep pursuing your goals, work to get better, and opportunities will open for you.

**Ethnic Identity: P.J.’s Roots of Perseverance.**

In P.J.’s interview he was confident and eager to start the conversation. He was seated with a big smile on his face as we began, he leaned in and thoughtfully stated he had no preference for which picture we began discussing. We began with the picture below. P.J. eagerly shared his first memory of identifying ethnically as Latinx, which was in 2018. He grinned and leaned in, gesturing lively as he recounted the experience. He and his family were vacationing in New York. It was the same time as the World Cup tournament was happening in Russia. As they moved about the city, the games were echoing from bars and restaurants as watch parties full of fans cheered for their favorite teams. At this stage in the tournament there were several surprises.
Illustration 1: P.J.’s Ethnic Identity

Colombia had persevered in the early stages of the world cup tournament and was now moving up in the brackets. Higher perhaps than they had previously achieved. P.J. leaned in and fondly recounted his experience captured in the photo.

I had to identify myself as Colombian so I could spread my nationality all around the city with all the other people that were celebrating and reacting and stuff like that in the streets, 'cause everyone loves to win the world, they can see their country win the world cup!

P.J. and his family joyfully supported Colombia and their success by wearing the Colombian soccer jerseys, waving flags, and cheering their team on in Spanish. Several of these are considered traditions among fútbol fans around the globe. Regardless of traditions, the sporting event provides an opportunity for fans to celebrate their preferred teams, which includes countries of origin or align with fans’ ethnic identities. It is an interesting opportunity because
the choice is up to the fans. There are no rules or laws governing who may identify as which ethnicity. Race doesn’t matter, just the fan’s love for the country selected. P.J.’s family played a key role in his identification as Colombian. His parents and their siblings were born in Colombia while P.J., his siblings and many cousins were born in the states. Regardless of the place of origin, the cultural traditions of his family played a strong role in his identification. As we explored how he came to identify as Colombian, beyond the one soccer tournament, he explained other sources of influence. P.J. thoughtfully explained “probably my parents” are the major source of my cultural education. “But specifically, my dad... ’cause my dad only speaks Spanish, so he's definitely influenced my identity”. P.J. discussed his father with admiration as he thoughtfully explained his perspective. His father, an immigrant, has worked diligently with P.J.’s mother to make a life for their family all while not speaking the language of the mainstream community. Navigating daily life in another language is no small feat. P.J.’s dad serves as a model for perseverance. P.J. went on to explain one specific example in which his dad has influenced him for the better.

I think I represent myself more now than I did back in middle school. I would just try to fit in and just kinda show up as who I wasn't. I wanted to fit in and not express where like my roots are from. But now I definitely want to investigate more about my roots 'cause I've been born here, so my dad definitely influenced me over time to look more into who are my family members and get to know more about my culture.

The perseverance modeled by P.J.’s father during his formative years has now manifested in the perseverance P.J. models at school.

P.J. paused to think when asked if he had experienced challenges due to his ethnic identity. He thoughtfully explained:
I don't think that I’ve faced many challenges, but I have seen a bunch of other people face challenges being specifically Colombian and what's been happening on the news recently, and I know many of my family members who live in Columbia, they have been going through something similar that I've been seeing on the news. It's a really tragic thing, the challenges go on. Seeing them having to fight some the military and the government and stuff like that. Honestly, I think I'm very grateful that I haven't had to go through those challenges, but it also hurts me deeply knowing that other Colombians, and other people that I don't know, suffer [and persevere] through these challenges.

When compared to the struggles the Colombian people experience, it is no doubt understandable why P.J. struggles to identify struggles in his own life because of his ethnicity. P.J. could have referenced enrollment in a magnet program. While his school is diverse, there are few Hispanics in the magnet program when compared to other minority groups. Certainly, growing up in the United States, provides different understandings about freedom especially when compared to Colombia, who is publicly dealing with civil unrest. This all provides a lens through which P.J. analyzes his experiences.

P.J.’s love for Colombian culture comes together in the food, which he identified as his favorite part of the Colombian culture. Excitement and joy radiated from his musings about Colombian food. He explained:

I love Columbian food, and all of the different foods that originates from us, so that's what I love... empenadas, Columbian arepas, all of that stuff, I just love it... And so, I think that's my favorite part about being Columbia, 'cause I get to try all these foods and have them and I since enjoy them so much, it's amazing that I get to have them. They're my own.
The Colombian food he references serves as a concrete referent for his love of Colombian culture. The traditions wrapped around when the food was prepared, by whom, and with whom it is shared all added to his experiences and love. P.J. went on to describe in wistful way:

my mom's homemade arepas are my favorite... She doesn't make them too often. I'm probably gonna ask her to make 'em soon it’s been so long. But whenever she makes them, she gives us to dough and then we just put them on the pan and we put mantequilla (*butter*) on them or cheese on top. And then it just, it tastes great and hers are so much better than just frozen ones, so I love just having homemade ones.

P.J. takes care to explain not only the preparation of the arepa but the togetherness his family experiences when arepas are on the menu. His mom makes the dough, then together P.J. and his siblings cook the arepas and eat them as soon as they come off the stove topped with melted butter or melted cheese. One memory P.J. reminisced about including arepas and his mom is when his mom makes arepas in the morning before everyone gets up.

In the morning, I'll wake up and my mom has already made the dough and everything and said she would just ask ‘do you want arepa’. And I was like, Yeah, sure. And so then she would make one for us and then we all have one or many for breakfast time.

Beginning his day with a homemade breakfast, especially P.J.’s favorite Colombian dish, communicates an abundance of love and care wrapped into the act of preparing breakfast before school.

At school, ethnic diversity is a way of life. When describing the ethnic makeup of his school and his peers P.J. shared, “I'd say my school is pretty diverse, we are more of a community, 'cause it's a small school, and we’re all diverse.” The small, diverse learning community that makes up P.J.’s magnet school allows all students to fit in from his perspective. For P.J., he feels his ethnicity is most pronounced in his world language class. Two consecutive
years of the same language are required for graduation at P.J.’s school. P.J. shared “we only have the option of two languages either... I think it's Latin or it’s Spanish and I took Spanish for my language courses”. “So, I went in there and obviously I can't play off that I don't know Spanish, so that's where I testified, that I was Hispanic. I told the teacher that I knew some Spanish. Obviously, I'm not most fluent, but I do know some”. P.J. felt it was necessary for him to “testify” to his ethnic roots. His language skill would give him a bit of an advantage in these courses. If the teacher could not tell for sure from how he looked or his name, he felt it “she can probably tell as soon as I've started writing Spanish”. P.J. found the course easy due to his practice of speaking some Spanish at home with his mom and siblings.

Illustration 2: P.J.’s Perseverance: His ethnic identity
The comic in Illustration 2 was a synthesis activity to extract key points that could be shared with others like P.J. Scene by scene, captures key points that appeared he was especially fond of from our interview. This included selecting his pseudonym and his first memory of embracing an ethnic identity. The joy and the sense of community he felt amongst his family as well as complete strangers who also celebrated for the Colombian World Cup team. There was a sense of unity that brought his family together with others from around the world to rally for a common goal – the World Cup. Key family members have also contributed to his ethnic identity – his mother and father. P.J. named his father as the person who has had the most intentional influence over his ethnic identity development. Through his father’s perseverance and intentionality, he has provided for his family, even without a command of the English language. P.J.’s father is also the person encouraging him to stay connected with family in Colombia and the news/current events. His father encourages him to maintain and to continue to cultivate his experiences with Colombian culture and family. P.J. explains that he “testified” to his Hispanidad (Hispanic-ness) in his Spanish class.

He felt compelled to share this information with his teacher because he couldn’t hide his language ability and according to his account, it never occurred to him to try to hide it. The experience of owing his Hispanidad was a pivotal moment at school for P.J. due to the diverse nature of his school and not having to “claim his ethnicity” in other spaces in the school. Finally, P.J. champions Colombian cuisine as his favorite part of Colombian culture. He spoke about the cuisine with such ownership it was striking the immense pride it communicated. Colombian cuisine in P.J.’s house is also equated to his mother. She is the chef of the home and often prepares the basics before engaging the help of P.J. and his siblings to complete the dish and enjoy it together. P.J. talked around the togetherness his family experiences when enjoying the specific dishes of which he is most fond. To those ends, while it was not an explicit theme P.J.
identified and discussed, implicitly it was a part of each critical moment. Ultimately, P.J. hopes his story and examples are relatable and helpful to students like him. When P.J. first saw the comic, he responded “Wow! I love it so much! Thank you”. He had no suggestions for edits in content or imagery of the comic.

**Scholarly Identity: Academic Perseverance**

I think that I view myself as pretty intelligent. I think since I go to a magnet school, I do have a good opportunity here to be successful in life, and that school gives me that opportunity. So, I think it helped me on some level view myself as a scholar.

P.J. points out that he attends a magnet school. Magnet schools have a variety of requirements potential students must meet to be considered for admission. Locally, those admission requirements include meeting GPA, attendance, and conduct requirements in addition to standardized test scores. Finally, students may live anywhere within the school district, but transportation is not provided to the magnet programs. Once admitted, students must maintain grade, attendance, and conduct expectations to renew their enrollment annually. Entrance and maintaining enrollment in P.J.’s high school is a marker of success in and of itself but also a major contributor to P.J.’s scholarly identity. P.J.’s next picture is another contributor to his scholarly identity. His second photo captures his initiation into the National Honor Society, his greatest academic achievement to date. The National Honor Society, maintains national entrance requirements including scholarship, service, leadership, and character. Students must be in tenth grade or higher with a GPA of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale. Illustration 3 captures P.J.’s initiation into the National Honor Society. He described this as his biggest academic accomplishment to date. To accomplish enrollment in a magnet program and/or initiation into the National Honor Society, one must be dedicated to their pursuits while persevering challenges.
Illustration 3. P.J.’s Biggest Academic Achievement

While P.J. initially provided a couple of overarching markers of success, when asked for a specific example of when he felt particularly successful in school, without missing a beat, shared the following story.

I was struggling and my grades were kind of down, not the best that I want them to be. Then near the end of the quarter, right before the cut off I was to get them up. I think that was the most successful I felt. Being able to just get my grades back from the bottom to where they should, I think that's really motivational to me.

P.J.’s recounting of getting behind and needing to pull his grades back up is another academic example of his perseverance. As P.J. shared his story of losing academic motivation, allowing his grades to plummet, and then working hard to rebound, he reflected on the experience and shared what he took away from the experience. He paused and thoughtfully shared

I learned to not fall behind, because that's the main reason I focused on my grades. I didn't feel much motivation to do my work anymore, especially with online school. It just
felt like a constant repeat of just doing work and not feeling anything from doing it, so
then I just kinda stopped doing it for a while. Then I realized it's gonna hurt me in the
long run. I was like, I kinda gotta catch up on this... So that's the main thing I learned
from this. Just to stay on top of everything I have to do.

P.J.’s story of academic recovery is another manifestation of perseverance. As we discussed his
insights, P.J. could not identify any external challenges he felt he faced with being academically
successful. He shared because his school is a complete magnet program, all students experience
and must maintain some level of success. The school itself celebrates and encourages success in
its many forms. Instead of external challenges, P.J. shared the internal challenges his success
provokes and how he works through them.

I think I see challenges within myself. I feel like that I might be behind other classmates.
I want to go to a good college and stuff like that, so I sometimes feel like I'm not as
prepared. I still don't know which college I wanna go to and what I wanna major in or
anything like that. So, I get worried sometimes that I might not end up going to the
school I would wanna go to, and... That's the only challenge I think I face that I just am
not prepared enough.

As P.J. unpacks his perseverance through online school, but still struggles with anxiety over
doing enough, working hard enough, being successful enough. Despite the markers of success
previously shared, he still struggles with being “good enough”. His internal measuring of his
success compared to others, is a constant source of pressure he self-inflicts, and it is an area
through which he acknowledges he needs to process. P.J. is quick to recognize part of his success
can be attributed to sources of seemingly endless support. “I think my parents pushing me to do
and get good grades helped me out to be great in school and actually achieve better things.”
P.J.’s parents celebrate his successes with him but also encourage him when he is struggling.
They are also clear that he needs to go to college and pursue a career from there. The admiration and appreciation in the tone of P.J.’s voice as he explained the role of his parents support underscores the powerful stance, they have played in developing his goals and perseverance to achieve them.

Another group that has supported his success are his peers. “Seeing my classmates around me do good, 'cause I also want to be like them or be one of the best.” His parental support added with the positive peer pressure to do well seem to have created a recipe for success for P.J. His school has capitalized on celebrating success, creating an environment where students’ success fuels motivation across the student body to work hard and be recognized. The motivation to achieve good grades, hold high standards, and sustain the success have fueled P.J.’s perseverance and led to his success. P.J.’s goals for success do not end in high school but extend to his dream college which will lead P.J. to his dream career. P.J. revealed his future goals.

I wanna see at least a good part of the world. My favorite thing is just exploring and traveling and seeing things that I've never seen before, and especially in person, it's a whole different experience when you see something that you've never seen in person. I wanna be able to be traveling, but for a purpose. So, my plan is probably to become a pilot for an airline and being able to see the world that way. I think that's where I would wanna see myself just being an airline pilot and just... achieving at least most of my goals.

Fortunately for P.J., his school has a special aviation track for students like P.J.

With our whole aviation program at school it’s definitely given me start and I'm also taking a summer program at the international airport that's gonna teach us flight skills then I think at the end of the camp thing that I'll actually be able to fly by myself. It's really cool. I'm excited but nervous at the same time.
P.J.’s access to the summer program came through his magnet program providing him with experiences that may have otherwise been unavailable to him. This is another example of how his school motivates and fosters success. P.J. hopes to get a taste of being a pilot through the summer program which he believes will continue to foster his success and fuel his motivation to achieve his dreams. His parental support will be critical to making this summer program possible as he does not drive yet. He need transportation to and from the program, which for a family with two working parents, can be difficult to manage in addition to managing care for his siblings, or their transportation, etc. P.J. recognized the role his parental support played in his ability to participate.

The comic strip in Illustration 4 was a synthesis activity to extract key points that could be shared with others like P.J. Scene by scene, captures key points that appeared he was especially fond of from this segment our interview. The first moment was his acceptance into a magnet program. The acceptance and matriculation into a magnet program is a success of its own merit. P.J. however, also goes on to identify benefits of his enrollment including being surrounded by successful peers creating a community of success. One of the requirements for maintaining his enrollment in the magnet program requires him to meet renewal requirements annually. These include grade, conduct, and attendance expectations. The second scene depicts P.J. losing motivation and letting his grades drop, which could affect his standing and ability to maintain enrollment in the magnet program.
Illustration 4: P.J.’s Academic Perspective and Perseverance

The COVID pandemic forced a massive shift to online schooling which P.J. found hugely demotivating. He felt caught in a loop of doing work and turning it in and missed the actual instruction and classroom interactions that were not replicable within the technology tools or teacher expertise after being forced online. Scene three depicts P.J. efforts to change the low grades. P.J.’s ability to identify demotivators and the consequences of continuing to be derailed in his studies, he persevered, studied hard, completed makeup work, and ultimately pulled his grades up. He commented that it was not something he wanted to experience again. The process
alone seemed to be a sufficient demotivator hopefully preventing any future opportunities of repeating this experience.

The final three scenes are dedicated to key motivators of P.J.’s success. P.J. primarily recognizes his parents’ role in planting the seeds and cultivating his success. His parents’ encouragement from the beginning has modeled the seriousness and dedication P.J. demonstrates in school and in his dreams of his future career. These dreams were cultivated by his parents from the time he was a small boy. P.J. also identifies the role his peers play at school in motivating his success. He is surrounded by success and that motivated P.J. to work his hardest so he is a part of the many celebrations of collective school success. Finally, P.J. identified his most significant moment of personal success was being inducted into the National Honor Society at his school. This is the final scene on his comic because his story of perseverance led to his greatest academic milestone of success to date. His pride emanated from the photo and his recount of the experience.

**Connections: Encouraging Perseverance**

When looking at the interconnection between his ethnic and scholarly identities, again P.J. did not readily identify any challenges. P.J. explained “I don't feel like they're at odds, But I do feel like they're more separated”. P.J.’s academic experiences to date have not been shaded in any major way and certainly not in a negative way. P.J. thinks this is in part to the diverse student body at his current school. Earlier in his academic career P.J. had not embraced his ethnicity, instead he tried to fit in with his peers who did not identify as Latinx or Hispanic. In regard to benefits from both identifying as Latinx and being academically successful, he also did not see any major benefit. He continued:

I don't see many times where there were connections, and I feel like that also could pose an issue. I feel like they should be connected to a certain point, but there's not many
programs or anything that are more related to helping students who are Hispanic and other ethnic races.

He felt like there could be such programs locally. In fact, he felt “that there should be more programs” for academically successful Hispanic boys”. P.J. thinks that if there were more programs, it would help more boys who identify as Hispanic become more academically successful. Based on his own experience, without any specialized programs targeting academically successfully Latinx boys, he feels success is still possible. In fact, he explained how he felt he experienced success informally, from identifying as Latinx and being academically successful. This happened in his freshman year of high school.

So it was my freshman year of high school. There was the Spanish, Spanish National Honor Society, and I think that obviously being Hispanic got me into that. It’s something that definitely helped me with my education. And being a scholar.

In this scenario, P.J. benefitted from speaking Spanish at home. His language ability gave him an advantage in the Spanish classroom as the class is designed for students who do not speak Spanish to learn Spanish. Initiation into the National Spanish Honor Society (Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica) requires minimum grade requirements in Spanish class as well as conduct, service, etc. requirements for admission. P.J.’s proficiency in Spanish stems from his family’s Colombian lineage and is especially important in his communicating with his father, whose primary language is Spanish. While P.J. benefited in the scenario above, P.J. mentioned there might be some struggles from identifying as Latinx and academically successful. P.J. wanted to share that:

although there might be some struggles as being Hispanic and not having too many opportunities to be academically successful, I feel like you should still persevere. ‘Cause there's other people that are looking to help people who are Hispanic, and you might just
be able to find them through trying hard to be academically successful, so I feel like you just keep pursuing that and looking to be smarter and do good in school, you would definitely find those opportunities. They just open up if you try hard enough and persevere.

Participant B: Juxtapositions on Jay’s Journey

Jay is a junior at a local magnet school. He has vivid memories of his ethnic and scholarly experiences along his journey that have led him to proudly own his identities. Unfortunately, not all of Jay’s experiences that have molded him have been positive. Nonetheless, he is confident and secure in who he is and what he aspires to accomplish in the future. Jay’s story manifests multiple juxtapositions. The first juxtaposition resides in his ethnic identification and the quandary in which he often finds himself. Jay has a diverse ethnic identity and ethnic roots that have formed his ethnic identity over time. The next juxtaposition in Jay’s journey emanates from stereotypes and his journey to academic success. Jay recounts experiences of racism in his classes that created barriers to his success and how he succeeded despite these barriers. Finally, Jay’s journey leads him to confidence and belief in his own abilities to overcome challenges that come his way. Jay has clear goals for the future and plans to meet them. The irony in Jay’s experience is what is a juxtaposition to some is an integral part of how he identifies ethnically and academically.
Jay was very open and chatty from the start of our conversation. He emanated a comfort and an excitement to discuss how he identifies. It was clear that it was a subject he has spent time thinking about outside of this project. The first juxtaposition in Jay’s journey manifested from birth. Jay proudly identifies ethnically as mixed. “I'm actually mixed with a lot of different ethnicities, white, black, Mexican and Spaniard.” Others may choose black or white, Spanish or Mexican when filling out forms or answering questions about their identity. They are normally posed as opposites – especially regarding race. For Jay however, they are all important pieces of his identity. Jay feels like he literally wears his Latinx ethnicity and in his first picture, Jay captured himself in a brightly colored top depicting native flora which he described was fashionable in his culture. He loves Latinx fashion trends but admits that many here do not understand it. Jay explained that people often ask when he is headed dressed so nicely when he is out of school. Jay laughed and cited this as his normal attire outside of school and that many people just do not understand his style preferences. Just as Jay’s style preferences are confusing
to some, so is his ethnicity. Jay easily described his first memory of ethnic identification in the following way.

Well, this one's actually probably gonna be probably a while ago... because whenever I was a kid, I'm actually mixed with a lot of different ethnicities, white, black, Mexican and Spaniard. Okay, except the thing is I'm like, I'm very light skinned, so whenever I was a kid, here, I really only had friends who were African American, and a lot of the time, I would actually get picked on for being so light skinned... I remember whenever I was a kid, it used to make me very, very upset to constantly be called “white boy”, considering that I never really knew anybody in my family who was white.

The juxtaposition of how Jay identified versus how other categorized caused him provoked feelings of confusion and angst. What was clear and normal to Jay was not to others and their reactions made him question why others did not see him in the same light he saw himself. The external pressure to meet the societal norms of perceived ethnicity caused Jay to question himself and his own perceptions. Jay went on to share a specific example of how this quandary manifested in his experiences. He described being conflicted when he was younger, especially when he was asked to fill out demographic information but could only choose one box.

I am mixed, and the thing is, my birth certificate actually says black male, so every single time that I fill something out, then the least I do is put black male... There are boxes nowadays you can you just fill in multiple, but I remember back whenever I was in elementary and stuff that they really only... They were like, oh, you can only do one. I remember every single time I just asked my mom, ‘Oh, what do I do in and what do I fill in?’ She would usually just tell me to put Hispanic, Latino, male or African-American.
When Jay was born his mother was asked only for race, black or white, and not ethnicity. Since Jay’s mom identifies as black, she therefore chose the same for her son in that moment. As a young child, Jay naturally relied on his mom and family to support him through this identity crises. Considering Jay’s descriptions of his early experiences, it is not surprising that Jay identifies his mom as the main influence on his ethnic identity. With admiration in his voice, Jay explained:

I'd probably have to say, the main one is probably my mom, because whenever I was young, I had some sort of identity crisis constantly, constantly being picked on, and she was always just trying to make me feel better. I remember one time she specifically sat me down because it's actually a very common thing to do. So, I've seen and heard black parents have to have this talk with their black children, usually about things with police and such, and the fact that they're growing up to face prejudice and these other things that other kids just wouldn't have to deal with. And my mom actually told me that she didn't think she'd have to have that conversation with me because I was so light. But as I got older, I gradually... I actually started looking more and more Hispanic and... Yeah, she had that conversation with me. She probably was the one that made me feel the most comfortable being mixed.

Jay’s love and fondness for his mom were clear in through his gentle tone of voice and the care with which he described his mom’s unwavering support. While Jay described feeling conflicted in these moments when he was forced to identify or disclose how he identified, his mom is his source of strength. Jay explains that he has experienced definite benefits because of his ethnic identity.

Most definitely. It's actually,... it's made me a little bit uncomfortable recently because I think about four years ago, I started doing a coding program at a local community center.
The thing is it's supposed to be for kids who are minorities. My mom's always signing me up ever since I was a kid, she's always for programs like that, and it's never really bothered me 'cause like I mentioned beforehand, I was very used to being the only light skin person in a classroom or for a summer camp or even a family reunion. I think that... I don't know, it's happened a lot recently as well. In looking at colleges, just seeing what HBCUS I should possibly apply for, what kind of scholarships I could get, which are not only based off of the fact that I’m a minority, but also because of my mom's yearly income and all this other stuff, right? And part of me always, I don't know, part of me felt guilty, she would mention it, because of the fact that... I was like, well, I don't know, I don't feel like I need all this stuff. She would kinda just take the pressure off of me and try to shift the blame to herself and be like, well, you know, I'm not really giving you an option, you’re applying.

Jay’s discomfort over participating in a program for minority students is interesting. Whether he identified as Hispanic, black, or mixed, he was always within the target population for whom the program was designed. His mother provides the guidance and takes the lead, helping Jay find peace with where he is. Jay’s mom understands that he will be better prepared to reach his dreams if he is engaging in these extra programs along the way. When asked what he valued most about his ethnicity, he leaned toward the screen, smiled, and described the closeness of his family.

In Texas, mainly with my Hispanic family. One thing is just how close everyone is, and we usually go up there once per year, once every other year, and yet it's so it always feels like we're at home. Then some of us moved down here and we’re always just a very close even if we are very far.
Considering that P.J. is now more mature and is in high school, I asked if he still had these “identity crisis” experiences. Jay replied “no, nowadays, it's pretty common to be mixed with multiple ethnicities. People get interested more, so whenever I mention just how many things I am mixed with, people are more so just interested and they're like, Oh, that's cool.” It is also part of growing up to become more confident in who you are, how you identify, and with whom you choose to surround yourself. Jay’s ethnic identity and source of strength lies in his family. In times of challenge and success Jay’s story revolved around his family, especially his mother, indicating the strong influence they have had on Jay and his ethnic identity to this point in his life.

Illustration 6: Jay’s Ethnic Identity
The comic in Illustration 6 was a synthesis activity to extract key points that could be shared with others like Jay. Each scene captures key points that stood out as important during the interview. This began with selecting his pseudonym, Jay, and his first memories of deciding how he identified ethnically. Jay fully embraces all the ethnicities that contribute to his identity as ‘mixed’ even when others do not. He now exudes a confidence when discussing his ethnicities, perhaps stemming from the struggles in his childhood. Jay reminisced about the struggles of being picked on for being “light skinned” when his mother was dark skinned and identified as black. His family locally is also dark skinned and identifies as black.

This leaves Jay as the outlier with his light skin. While his family is not phased about the difference, Jay was often picked on for being “white” compared to the friends and family with whom he interacted. Scene four adds to the challenges of ethnic identification for Jay. Trying to fit into the provided boxes when Jay was younger was always a challenge for him. Recent changes to the US Census categories have helped as there are now options to identify your ethnicity (Hispanic or not) and to identify your race beyond white and black. There are now options of mixed race that provide residents and citizens more opportunities to answer the question without compromising some part of their ethnic identity. Jay’s mom provided strong support and guidance for Jay, which is depicted in scene five. Finally scene six depicts Jay’s current internal struggles with his ethnicity and his comfort level of taking advantage of programs designed for minority students.

**Scholarly Identity: Jay’s Academic Agency**

As we shifted to discuss Jay’s scholarly identity, Jay chuckled and shared that he finds school to be pretty easy. For those people who judge Jay’s academic ability based stereotypically on his race or ethnicity alone, they will quickly discover the juxtaposition of their stereotypes...
with his performance in school. Jay admitted, with a half-smile, that when he was younger he didn’t always try his hardest.

So, I remember middle school a lot. I didn't really try my hardest when it came to academics, I usually had all these Bs... I could have had As... It's just I wasn't really much of an over-achiever, which is kind of weird because I was a bit of a perfectionist and I still am, but I just never could break bad habits of procrastination.

As he matriculated to high school, many of his friends went to different schools and Jay changed a bit.

Last year, I had all A’s for the majority of the year because I don't know, it's just I figured that I might as well put the extra effort in. I remember I also did a lot of extra-curricular programs. I had like three per week. I was balancing everything really well and everything just felt so easy, and last year was my freshman year.

Jay’s high school regularly celebrated student success – both academically and in extra-curriculars. Jay described how this can be both rewarding and anxiety producing. His school is: always actively pushing kids to join new clubs and basically push themselves to their limits, which is why they also actively reward successful students. We’re doing something special for the students who did all this other stuff, and they also have a solid 70% of the weekly emails just praising successful students.

Jay shared that the school highlighting student success wasn’t necessarily motivating.

I don't know, it just doesn't always feel like I'm never doing enough at that school. Interesting, except at the same thing, I mean, at the same time, it's not like I can also write award-winning literature paper while being head of the winning swim teams, at the same time, I guess, there's so many things. There are 20 to 30 kids doing all these cool things and an email per week, and whenever they find themselves in it, they're like, Oh
wow, that's so cool I’m one of them. And then if, I'm not in it, that I'm just like, Wow, I can't believe I'm not any of them. But at the same time, I don't know if I'd rather be any of them, or if part of me just wants to be like, Yeah, I need to do all of these things. Why can't I do all of these things?

Illustration 7: Jay’s Scholarly Identity

His second picture (Illustration 7) was of himself in his school uniform. Because his uniform is so different from his personal style, he felt it is a strong representation of his scholarly identity. Even though the school uniform is mandated and a uniform is supposed to make everyone dress the same, removing dress as a status symbol, Jay’s personality still comes through with his accessories and his iconic curls. Jay’s academic agency stems from the model his mom sets for him.

My mom is a very, very hard working, and I was her first child. I'm also a very hard worker. But I'm also a lot more of a perfectionist, very competitive, and whenever I want
to win something or whatever, I'm motivated to do something that I kinda go all in and I typically, get the end result that I want or something close to it.

Jay’s motivation may well come from years of his mother’s modeling. Jay appears to be very comfortable with this renewed view of his work ethic since in middle school he did not feel the same. “I just feel happy with myself, I probably feel happier with myself that I'm doing something worthwhile instead of wasting my time.” Jay has discovered the benefits of working hard and these benefits serve as motivation for Jay. Since he made this shift, when asked how Jay overcomes academic challenges, he explains

I think as years went on, I had become a lot more emotionally mature, and when something doesn't work out, then I don't think that it's necessarily the right mindset to think, ‘Oh well, I guess it just wasn't meant to be’... It's more so something like, maybe this time what I did wasn't good enough. It's not like I didn't do my best because I did, but if I did it again, it could be better.

These perspectives contribute to Jay’s academic success and will drive him to achieve his goals. Jay’s sister’s boyfriend is a sort of role model for Jay. He works in software development and really enjoys his work. His insights helped Jay to decide on his future career aspirations. Jay aspires to earn himself a role on an innovation team for Microsoft or Google. He adds, Amazon’s IT department is another location he could see himself working. He is so committed to the idea he has already begun mapping out his college aspirations.

I could get to where I want with only a bachelor's degree, but depending on the type of scholarships I get, then I might stay an additional 2 years or so to get a master's or something like that. I'll probably just get some job at a... tech company, but I've quite a few connections already in the coding extracurriculars that I do, and I'd probably just try and get a good paying job.
Jay has done the hard work of researching what it will take to reach his goals. He can now spend his remaining high school years participating in experiences that will prepare him to be competitive in the college selection and scholarship process. This will be helpful because Jay really has big dreams.

I'd probably just try to be on some kind of innovation team of sorts for Microsoft or Google... Hopefully, Google, just because I'm sure that Google's innovation teams would be a lot more interesting. Or maybe something like Amazon. Amazon's IT department is so cool. So cool. It's actually amazing.

Earning a spot on an innovation team at one of these major companies will require him to work hard and constantly improve. His drive to be competitive and his willingness to reflect over his experiences when he falls short will serve him well.
Illustration 8: Jay’s Journey

The comic in Illustration 8 was a synthesis activity to extract key points that could be shared with others like Jay. Each scene captures key points that stood out as important during the interview. This began with his matriculation in a magnet school. As mentioned previously magnet programs are competitive entry programs. They have entrance requirements that include score requirements on standardized assessments, in addition to requirements for grades, conduct, and attendance. Once admitted, each program has renewal requirements students must meet in order to register for the upcoming year. Successful admission and renewal are both indicators of Jay’s academic success. The second scene highlights Jay’s shift from being unmotivated to do his best in middle school to being highly motivated in high school. The initiative and drive Jay yields in his studies and extracurricular activities will serve him well in reaching his career goals.

The third scene is of Jay earning his way onto the honor roll. His school does a great job, according to Jay, of recognizing student success both in the classroom and in co-curricular pursuits. Jay finds this recognition to be motivational. Since it appears to be a priority to the school, there is never a lack of motivation for Jay. Jay’s mom’s insistence that he take advantage of programs that interest him and in which he is qualified to participate have laid the groundwork for Jay to relentlessly pursue his goals. Her work ethic is another part of what motivates him to maintain his academic success. Together with his mom’s support and role model status, paired with a supportive and challenging school environment, Jay will be well prepared to pursue his dreams of serving on an innovation team for Google, Amazon, or Microsoft. These are the major players in the innovation field today and while new companies may emerge to compete, these big three companies will motivate Jay to pursue and persist until he reaches his goals. Finally, in the last scene, Jay thoughtfully shares his thoughts on resilience. He believes that the best way to overcome critics is to pursue your goals to success. It may not be a linear assent but what is
important is that you keep trying. Jay also explains how good it feels to reach his goals, which is the best reward of all.

**Connections: Don’t Judge a book by its cover**

Jay described his schools as always being ethnically diverse. So initially, when asked if he saw any benefits to identifying as Latinx and being academically successful, he didn’t see that as the case. As previously described, Jay’s magnet program does a great job of recognizing student success in many areas, so everyone has an opportunity to be recognized if they choose to put in the work. Because of the diversity in his current school Jay feels that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. He has not encountered programs that supported him because he was Latinx and academically successful. The extra-curricular coding programs were for minorities, but they did not have any academic requirements. This left Jay unable to identify anything that he gained access to (opportunities, experiences, materials, etc.) or experienced because of both being Latinx and academically successful. He went on to explain however, that it when he is recognized it looks good for the school.

Well typically, since most schools are so diverse, I feel like a lot of opportunities for the school to be like, ‘Hey, look this, look at all of our successful students’, and then they have lots of kids of different ethnicities up there, then I think that it just looks better. But the fact that it was actually something that I was mentioned whenever I was applying for, opportunities and I was looking to apply for colleges as well. Well, look at this kid, he's actually multiple of them (ethnicities) so that looks so good. It's very easy to fit into whatever category, I guess is necessary for others to kind of place me into, which... I wouldn't say it's necessarily a bad thing, because realistically, that's how it's going to be for the rest of my life, but I also really don't think that there's anything that wrong with it....
When we began to discuss challenges, he may have experienced due to identifying as mixed and being academically successful, he shared that he hasn’t experienced that in high school but in elementary and middle school he had many memories. The most vivid memory that came immediately to mind supporting this entailed the inherent bias of his teacher.

I had this teacher, and I remember she was my reading teacher and homeroom teacher. I was actually pretty obsessed with reading and she was like, Wow, you're so smart, and all this stuff. There was actually this small group, I wouldn't say tutoring, 'cause really, it was an extra thing that she did during lunch where she was teaching these second graders conjunctions and all this other stuff. And I guess it was something like a little out there for a second to learn, so she was only teaching it to certain kids who... I don't know, who sort of deemed worthy. I was initially a part of the group.

It is important to note that at this point, Jay’s teacher was taken with how smart he was based on his reading performance. She seemed very excited and engaged with him and even included him in the advanced group for whom she provided enrichment instruction during their lunch hour.

I remember that after she met my mom, who my mom is also very young, she treated me very, very differently and yeah, she was... As a kid, was a lot more light skinned, I was actually very fair skin, in elementary was even lighter. But my mom is black and Hispanic, or black and Mexican, and she mostly looks black, and I remember it was a very... I don't know, it wasn’t very common back then to be mixed. After she met my mom, I was no longer eligible to learn all this other stuff, so really, we ate lunch in the classroom, and I would just sit there pretending... I was reading a book.

Jay felt his eligibility to participate in the enrichment instruction during lunch changed after the teacher met his mom. His assumption was it was because of her age and ethnicity. Jay made this
decision at a really young age. Some may say too young an age to fully understand what he is describing.

I was just listening to her teaching conjunctions. I remember one memory that I had very vividly, as I remember one time, I actually tried to answer a question that she said... And I don't remember what the question was, I don't remember if I answered it right, but I think that... I feel like the question was something along the lines of what is a conjunction for cannot And I was like, Can’t. Then she scolded me. I was like, ‘Wow’, so then I just proceeded to just not talk in that class, I actually... I really hated that school.

Whatever caused Jay’s teacher to change how she treated him, left a profound impression on him. In her class it shut him down completely. Jay was gracious in his response when asked why he thought that happened.

The lady, I don't... I can't really blame her that much, she was very old, like she was my second-grade teacher. Which was probably about eight years ago. And she was probably like 78. I understand her prejudice, if you will, and she was definitely treating me as such. Jay exuded such grace for this teacher, even when she didn’t for him. He justified her prejudice as resulting from how she grew up and the experiences or modeling she received from her elders. He shared another painful memory in the same grade.

Another thing was that... Do you know what CLUE is? I was going to apply for Clue in second grade. But obviously, CLUE is an accelerated reading class, and she really, really, really did not want me to apply for Clue. So, I was never actually given the opportunity until I think that a guidance counselor saw me reading and I was like, ‘Wow, that's a pretty big book you're reading... Are you in Clue?’ And I was like, ‘Ah, what’s CLUE?’ and she was like, “we should get you tested.” And I was like, “Okay”. The lady who gave me the test is like, “Oh yeah, you definitely qualify for it.” I was placed in CLUE. CLUE
was a little moment of identity crisis for me because in CLUE, I don't think there was a single black person in my class, once again I felt out of place after the entire second grade year of being treated differently because of well, I guess it was 'cause the color... the color of my skin, but really it was just how she perceived me. So really, she did perceive me as a Black child and yeah, I felt out of place once again, and I remember pretty much the entire rest of my second-grade year, I didn't talk much at all, especially not my CLUE class, 'cause I just felt so out of place.

These traumatizing experiences could have left Jay bitter and angry. Yet he exhibited neither bitterness or anger over the situation.

Luckily, next year was way better, significantly better, because I had this math teacher, my homeroom teacher, and I was really good at math, so I was pretty good then, and I had a different Clue teacher. And so, I just felt a lot better. But that second grade year was very eye opening as a child.

Looking back, Jay expressed that second grade was the worst of it.

I remember in my kindergarten and first grade, I had a young black teacher, she absolutely loved my mom. In third grade, I only had two teachers. One for math and science and the other for reading and English, or English and History, or something like that. And she didn't like me very much. I don't exactly remember why, but I remember after she ended up meeting my mom, she treated me significantly worse, but at the same time. I really don't remember all too much the reason why, but I do think that it is something similar to the sorts to second grade just not as severe.

The challenge of a second-grade student noticing that the teacher treated him differently after meeting his mom is alarming. Jay however described it with a kindness and understanding in his voice. He rationalized the teacher’s actions due to how they grew up and what they experienced.
Jay also understood that many people might not agree with his perspective. He chose to deal with the experience by getting quiet. Other students may have acted out, but even when he was excluded from the lunch time enrichment experiences he still listened and absorbed what he could. Fortunately for Jay, it ended when he matriculated to third grade. When asked what Jay would say to other students who has similar experiences as him, he replied:

I think that something along the lines of in the face of adversity, I think that the best way to prove someone wrong is just be successful. Most people who get discouraged like that are really already... I don't know, I feel like they're holding themselves down really... It's very easy to get discouraged by others, especially as a child, but I think that as long as you believe you can do it, then one day you'll be able to be successful, which will feel great.

**Participant C: Danny’s Determination**

Danny awkwardly introduced himself. He is currently a sophomore, enrolled in one of the most competitive magnet programs in the school district. Entry to this program has one of the highest test score entrance requirements and is one of the most sought-after programs in the city. He was very grateful to participate in this project but he was also rather shy. He identifies as Hispanic and more specifically, Mexican. Determination was a key theme that emanated from the interview. Danny is determined to keep his ethnic traditions thriving, determined to challenge himself academically, and determined to fulfill his dreams of becoming a computer scientist. He began the interview very reserved and shy. As we explored his success, he became more relaxed and opened up to share his experiences.

**Ethnic Identity: Danny’s Determined Family**

As we began the interview, Danny was standing in front of his computer awkwardly shifting his weight from side to side. You could hear the nerves in Danny’s voice as he replied to
the first question “How do you identify ethnically?”. Danny replied quickly with one word, “Hispanic”. I asked Danny if there was a country with which he and his family most readily identified. He calmed a bit and replied “mostly Mexican” in almost an exhale. Danny links his cultural identification strongly to his mother. “Whenever I'm with my mother, she and her friends, they're always doing something specific together or having parties or celebrating something, and they always have their own things, and they are really specific to Mexico.” Danny’s mom and her friends are determined to keep the Mexican culture alive for Danny and his siblings, and friends. The intentional focus of celebrating Mexican holidays and special events, speaking Spanish, preparing ethnic dishes all contribute to rooting Danny and his friends in the Mexican culture.
His first photo (Illustration 9) is of a Day of the Dead altar, one of the many Mexican celebrations his mom and her friends celebrate. The Day of the Dead is a cultural celebration where families celebrate their loved ones who have passed on. Cultural activities like creating an altar with photos of their lost loved ones, favorite foods of those who have moved on, candles, etc. is one way they remember them. Traditional statues of skeletons doing regular activities like fishing, or dancing, or any number regular tasks may be used to represent what activities their loved ones enjoyed most. It is also a time to tend to the grave sites, cleaning them and adorning them with flowers and maybe even a family picnic. It is a holiday that is often misunderstood outside of the Mexican culture and is not supported by all Mexicans either. For Danny however, it is a strong representation of his ethnic identity. It is also a holiday unique to Mexico that his mother and her friends celebrate making it Danny’s choice to represent his ethnic identity. When asked if there is a time, or place, he feels his ethnicity more than other times, Danny quickly replies:

The school I go to is pretty diverse, but sometimes I do feel pretty Hispanic... I don't know, I feel like I'm mostly the only Hispanic kid in most of my classes that can speak Spanish, I think... So that’s an advantage sometimes.

Danny stated that his school is diverse. It is important to note that Danny’s magnet program is not school-wide. About half of the school is in the magnet program while the other half of the school are in the traditional program. Only 13% of the school population identifies as Hispanic making it easy to understand why Danny says he feels like the only Hispanic in all his classes. The odds are that Danny is the only Hispanic in his classes with such a small percentage of Hispanics in the entire school. There were no figures published on the school website regarding diversity within the optional program. Danny also shared that he finds his fluency in Spanish to be advantageous. When asked how it was advantageous, he chuckled and went on to
explain that his Spanish really helps him in his French class, which, is one place he really feels his ethnicity. His fluency in Spanish and English provides him a framework to learn other languages. His experience learning two languages in addition to the overlap between French and Spanish also gives Danny an edge in learning French. Danny struggled to identify other benefits to identifying as Hispanic at this point in his life. Regarding challenges though, Danny provided some broad experiences. He explained he’s had several experiences where “I just feel like sometimes people can really judge you just based on only looking at you”. Danny clarified that the judgement he experience was “with older people, not my friends. I don't really feel like younger peers do that, but older people they... I feel like they do like to judge and assume a lot of things...”.

The biggest influences on his ethnic identity, according to Danny, are my mother and my sister. My father, he's a lot more quiet about things. But my mom, she really embraces the whole thing. She’s, always having Mexican things, talking to me in Spanish and just trying to make me feel included and so does my sister, she tries to get me involved too. And I speak to them in Spanish... these are just things I feel that are important. Danny’s mother and sister intentionally include him in activities and habits that reinforce his Mexican heritage. The importance Danny assigns to his family keeping their Mexican cultural and family traditions alive provide the foundation for Danny’s ethnic identity.

My favorite part of identifying as Mexican, I would say is my family. I value my family a lot just because they're the ones that do everything for me and support me. Because I wasn't really born in small... I was born here. I know that. So they are the ones that helped me introduce me to Mexican traditions.
Danny’s understanding of his family’s cultural traditions were intentionally introduced and maintained in his family. While it might be easy to assimilate to the American way of doing things, celebrating American holidays, and only speaking English, Danny’s family puts in the work to honor and respect his family’s heritage. Through the conscious maintenance of his cultural foundations, they should live on strong across generations, provided the model Danny’s mother has provided continues. Danny’s fondest memories of his culture and his family include Mexican “food and music. my mom and dad listen to Mexican music a lot. They like to play Mexican music, and this been a part of me since I was little...”. Danny described how his parents often listen to Mexican music while they are working around the house. He explained it is not uncommon to find his mother in the kitchen cooking traditional Mexican food while the music provides the soundtrack to her practice. The same occurs when she is cleaning the house or while they complete household chores. You could say the intentionality with which Danny’s mom maintains their cultural practices underscores her determination to keep her children immersed in their cultural heritage.
Illustration 10: Danny’s Determination to maintain his ethnic heritage

The comic in Illustration 10 was a synthesis activity to extract key points that could be shared with others like Danny. Scene by scene, captures key points that appeared he was especially fond of from our interview. This included selecting his pseudonym and identifying his pride in identifying as Mexican. While Danny was born in the U.S. his mom and sister have played key roles in his ethnic identity development. Their network of friends and family keep their cultural heritage: traditions, products, and practices, thriving by joining together to celebrate key holidays and corner stone moments. Scene three is dedicated to their lively
celebrations that Danny cited as an important part of keeping the culture thriving within their community.

In scene four, Danny goes on to explain that he feels his Mexicanismo (Mexicanism) in his French class. He finds his proficiency in English and Spanish help him learn French. He also thinks his fluency in Spanish gives him an advantage in French since many words are similar between the two languages even if they are pronounced differently. In scene five, Danny names his mother as the most influential person regarding influencing his ethnic identity. Danny expressed appreciation for the intentionality his mom and sister employ to keep Danny engaged in the Spanish language and Mexican culture. For Danny, his favorite parts of his Mexican culture are the food and music, especially when shared with his family. Danny consistently describes his fondness for the togetherness of his family during celebrations or even when they are speaking Spanish with one another even though he does not specifically name it. Danny relies on his mom, his sister, and his mom’s friends to immerse him in the Mexican culture and build his understanding of and affinity for these traditions.

**Scholarly Identity: Danny’s Determined Supporters**

Danny, like the other participants, has qualified for entrance into one of the most competitive magnet programs in the district. Danny’s continued matriculation in this program is itself an indicator of success. Danny began discussing his academic success, not by owning it, but rather by explaining “I want to challenge myself and just push myself as much as I can.” I asked Danny to share more information about where that drive comes from. He expounded:

I feel like it's in the things my parents say, working with my mom and dad, mostly my dad, he works out with the roofs, and whenever I work with him there. I don’t like it and wouldn't like it. And my mom just says, to ‘get a degree. It's the best thing you can do for your life'.
Danny’s parents provide motivation for Danny’s success in school through providing experiences for him. Their jobs support their family, but they require hard work and are not glamorous. The hard physical labor to roof or clean homes and businesses is not attractive to Danny. His parents use Danny’s dislike for their work to encourage him to go to college and work towards his dream career. With their support, Danny seeks to challenge himself in school.

Recently my freshman year, I took my first AP, and I got my score this summer. I got a five on that, so I was really proud of myself for doing that, and from the hard work I did. I was just studying a lot, and just saying that five, it was like a huge.

According to the College Board only 15% of students who sit for the AP Human Geography test nationally, score a 5. It was a major success for Danny. He went on to explain that had had not always had the opportunities he has now. Danny thoughtfully explained:

At the beginning of my schooling, I went to the school that was close by to me. It was just a regular school. But during the fourth grade, I believe one of my teachers, she recommended to my parents, that I should transfer schools over to a magnet school because she said I was pretty smart and all that. So we did, and after I transferred for my fifth grade year, they said I should transfer again to a magnet middle school after that. I did and went through that high performing magnet school middle and high school.

Through the attentiveness of Danny’s fourth grade teacher and the support she provided his family in navigating the magnet application process, he was exposed to more rigorous instruction. Danny thrived in the environment as he maintained eligibility to renew his magnet transfer each year and then qualify for one of the most competitive middle school and high school programs.
Illustration 11: Danny’s Greatest Academic Achievement

Danny’s second picture (Illustration 11) is of his initiation into the National Junior Beta Club. He felt that was his greatest academic accomplishment that he had celebrated to date. Danny shared that his initiation into the National Junior Beta Club motivated him to continue working hard toward other opportunities that would be available in high school. He explained he aspires to qualify for initiation in the National Honor Society in his junior year which has academic entrance requirements in addition to service requirements. “I would say that being academically successful shows to a lot of people that you work hard and you're always persevering. It's just a part of life that those skills translate into the real world.” When asked about a particular story, exemplifying his determination, that he was proud of, Danny grinned and replied:

maybe just go back to my AP class, at the end of the year. We needed to finish the last few units of the curriculum and we needed to go through fast, so it was a lot of work in the short amount of time. I felt like my parents encouraged me to just to keep up the
work. I don't know, I just felt like I had this little time to work and then after that I can just... rest.

So, Danny dug in and powered through the long nights of studying and learning as much as he could so he was as prepared as possible for the AP exam. As Danny already mentioned, he earned a score of a 5 on the exam (the highest score possible). To Danny, this was evidence that his hard work would pay off in school, even if it meant he sacrificed things he would rather be doing in the moment.

Danny is quick to recognize the positive role his parents play in his academic success. Danny fondly shared how his parents support has aided in his success.

I feel like that did kind of come naturally (being smart), I was... I was kinda focusing more on my schoolwork ever since kindergarten. My mom and dad always said ‘you are so smart’ ever since I was little kid. I don't know, I just feel like my parents, would do anything to help me succeed. Anything like, Oh, I need to buy this textbook or to get this for studying, they'll just buy it right away. No questions.

While Danny did not cite it directly, the work his parents did to work through the magnet application process and then getting him to school on time each day are major contributions to his education. Magnet programs in Danny’s school district do not provide transportation to and from the magnet program. So, while you may apply to attend any magnet program in the district, your family is responsible for transportation to and from school each day. This can be a logistical challenge for any family, but especially for a family with two working parents and multiple children. In addition to making the resources he needed available to him, his parents managed the major task of making the opportunity accessible to him and encouraging him to maintain the required grades, conduct, and attendance to keep him qualified for renewal.
Danny hopes all his academic endeavors will lead him to his dream job. Danny has big dreams for his future. Danny excitedly chatters about his goals, often not finishing one thought before moving on to the next.

It has to be somewhere in the computer science industry, my sister’s boyfriend, he works as a data scientist or analyst, and I am interested. Knowing what computers can do it, I feel like... Also he gets to work at home, I feel like that's kind of cool, just working on home, I just kind of got interested in that whole thing.

Danny’s interest in being a computer scientist or analyst will serve him well in the future as it is currently ranked second on the US News and World Report’s 2021 list of Best Technology Jobs. A career in the computer sciences will also mean Danny will not have to engage in the jobs he already knows he is not fond of; cleaning and roofing.
Illustration 12: Danny’s Scholarly Identity

The comic in Illustration 12 was a synthesis activity to extract key points that could be shared with others like Danny. Scene by scene, it captures key points that appeared he was especially fond of from our interview. This included primarily the pride Danny takes in challenging himself. The academic challenges Danny takes on serve as an opportunity to demonstrate his determination to do his best in every academic situation. This is represented in scene one by his matriculation in his magnet program. Danny is enrolled in a magnet program where only 13% of the student body identifies as Latinx and there is no publicly available data regarding the percentage of students who identify as Latinx enrolled in the magnet program at
the school. Scene two depicts the opportunities he has had to learn what he does not want to do in the future. Using the experiences he disliked as motivation, Danny has maintained his engagement in challenging academic pursuits. His first major accomplishment in high school, is depicted in scene three. Danny achieving a score of ‘5’ on the AP Human Geography exam his freshman year. Danny’s determination to achieve the highest score on the AP exam is evidenced in the studying and sacrifices he made to continue to study when other opportunities presented themselves. Scene four depicts his fourth-grade teacher who helped his parents enroll him into a magnet program so he would be challenged. It is unclear where Danny would be today if his teacher had not helped his parents understand the opportunities available to Danny based on his performance and how to navigate the system to take advantage of these opportunities. Scene five represents the unwavering support his parents have provided him to pursue his academic interests. From working to get Danny enrolled in a program that would challenge and develop his academic prowess, to the logistical maneuvers they must have performed to keep him engaged, to the materials he needed for particular assignments and projects, his parents have always been nothing but supportive. Their unwavering support contributes to his success. Finally, Danny hopes to be a computer scientist or analyst in the future. He holds his sister’s boyfriend as a role model for this sort of job. He enjoys computers and likes the flexibility the job could potentially provide. His self-discipline and hard work will serve him well in job that can provide a lot of freedom and self-direction.

**Connections: Ethnic + Scholarly Determination**

As Danny finally was more relaxed with the interview, we explored the intersection of his ethnic identity and his scholarly identity. Danny struggled to identify a time he had benefitted from being Hispanic and academically successful. He paused and thought, he started to try to explain but he could not identify anything. You could see how much he wanted to have
something to share but was unable. Instead, Danny focused on his “good luck of having special parents”. The unwavering support he reiterated throughout our time together and the examples he shared, his parents are a major part of his success. One could also consider the support his parents received from teachers along the way encouraging his parents to seek out a magnet program for him, helping them through the application process to keep him challenged. To this point, Danny and his parents have worked hard to keep Danny engaged in experiences that would help him achieve. The success therefore that Danny has experienced to date is more about hard work and effort and not about his ethnicity.

On the other side, Danny was hesitant to outline challenges he has experienced because of identifying as Latinx and being academically successful. Danny slowly began to share when he meant.

I would guess, sometimes there's a different... I guess I would say lifestyle, in our households than I see from other kids, and it'll just make it harder to work on homework. Both of my parents are working, my mom works as a cleaner and my dad is a roofer, sometimes they're not really around and I’m here by myself. Sometimes when I need to go somewhere and they are working, that kinda makes a problem right, and sometimes I need to join them in the work and help them out, and that just takes more of my time.

Throughout the interview Danny only focused on how supportive and helpful his parents have been. As he admits to the challenges of having two parents that work long hours and laborious jobs. It is up to him to be self-disciplined to manage his time and get his work done, especially if he needs to help them on their jobs. The reality of the Danny’s determination to be successful is something he is proud of. He nods to the fact that his peer’s may experience a different reality, which may make things easier on their success. Nonetheless, Danny’s acknowledgement of the challenges his family may face when compared to others is not shared
out of bitterness or shame but rather as another example of his determination to succeed despite the challenges he may face. Danny adds that his friends are a part of his success because “they keep you going and just support you no matter what.” There was an importance in Danny’s tone of voice when he shared this, almost as if he didn’t want to leave anyone out. Danny determination manifests throughout his story as he manages to juggle his schoolwork, maintain his grades in advanced courses and while helping his parents in their careers in addition to his work at home.

**Cross-Participant Analysis**

This study sought to first identify the nature of ethnic and scholarly identity for high-achieving high school Latinx students who identify as a boy in a southern context. Next it sought to identify any connections between their ethnic and scholarly identities. Data collected included the photographs participants captured or identify and submitted and an interview. The data was analyzed for common trends across the participants. Three major themes emerged from the collective data. Family played a key role in all the stories both in terms of ethnic identity development and scholarly achievement. Supporting and recognizing success positively affected all three participants’ experiences; and access to role models is the third commonality the boys identified as essential to their perseverance. All the boys could identity benefits from identifying as Latinx and being academically successful. The following sections involved a cross analysis of the three themes across participants.

**La Fuerza de la familia: The Strength of Family**

All the boys spoke to the importance of family. Whether it was a traditional nuclear family or a single mom and siblings, the importance of family was universally important to both the ethnic identity development and to scholarly achievements. Regarding ethnic identity development, each of the participants named a parent as the person who’d had the most influence
over their ethnic identity. Strong support from parents aided each of the participants to feel comfortable in their own skin, even when challenged. P.J. shared about his father.

My dad definitely influenced it in a good way, I represent... I think I represent myself more now than I did back in MS school, I would just try to fit in and just kinda show up who I wasn't, express who, where I like my roots are, but I definitely wanted to investigate more now about my roots 'cause I've been born here, so he definitely influenced me over time to look more into who was my family members and get to know more about just my culture.

Jay shared about the role his mom played in his identity development and his comfort in his own skin.

I'd probably have to say, probably the main one is probably my mom, because whenever I was young, I had some sort of identity crisis constantly, constantly being picked on, and she was always just trying to make me feel better. She was the one that made me feel the most comfortable being mixed.

Danny named:

my mom, she really embraces the whole thing, being Mexican, always having celebrations, talking to me in Spanish and just trying to make me feel included and all that, and so my sister, she gets involved too, and I talk to them in Spanish.

Aside from the person themselves, family closeness, cultural celebrations, traditional food dishes, and music were cited as concrete examples of influences. P.J.’s favorite part of the Colombian culture are the foods. “I love all of the different Columbian foods because they originate from us ... empenadas, Columbian arepas, all of that stuff. I just love I get to try all these foods since enjoy them so much.”
Jay cites the tightknit nature of his family as his favorite part of his ethnicity. “One thing is how close everyone is, and we usually go there once per year, or every other year, and it always feels like we're at home. We're always very close even if we are very far.” Danny, like P.J., enjoys the food and music and like Jay, the family closeness.

I'll value my family a lot just because they're the ones that do everything and support. I was born here. I know that. So, they were the ones that helped me introduce to the Mexican culture. Other than food, I would say the music, my mom and dad a listen to it a lot, but mostly my mom, they like to play Mexican music and this has been a part of me since I was little.

The data was clear in supporting the role family plays in the development of their ethnic identity development. Every participant also described their parents’ role in their academic success. P.J. shares “I think my parents pushing me to do and get good grades helped me out to be great in school and actually achieve better things.” Jay explained:

My mom, if you haven't heard from the rest of the interview, my mom is a very, very hard working, and I was her first child. I'm also a very hard worker. But I'm also a lot more of a perfectionist, very competitive, and whenever I want to win something or whatever, I'm motivated to do something that I kinda go all in and I typically, get the end result that I want or something close to it, that's great.

Finally, Danny explained:

my mom, dad always said you are so smart ever since I was little kid. I don't know, I just feel like my parents, I'd say them to like, Oh, I need to buy this textbook or on to get this for studying, they'll just buy it right away. No questions”. The data provided the above clear references to the support of parents as a key element of their academic success.
The collected data clearly outlines the importance of the familial support in both ethnic identity development and scholarly identity development.
Another theme that came from the data was regarding the recognition of success. Across the data, each participant had clear examples of how they benefitted from various opportunities to be recognized for their success. Being surrounded by success motivated these participants to continue to work hard to succeed. P.J. reflected:

I think since I go to a magnet school, I think that I do have a good opportunity here to be successful in life, and that school gives me that opportunity, and so I think it helped me on some view myself as a scholar. Also seeing my classmates around me do good, 'cause I also want to be a person to be like them or be one of the best.

Jay shared:

My school, most definitely, they actually actively reward successful students, and I feel like with so many new programs being added every year since the renovation has been fairly new, they're always actively pushing kids to join new clubs and basically push themselves to their limits, which is why they also actively reward us We're always doing something special for the students who did all this other stuff, and they also have a solid 70% of the weekly emails just praising successful students.

Danny cited an academic success:

My freshman year, I took my first AP, and I got my score over the summer and I got a five on that, so I was really proud of myself for doing that, and from the hard work I did, I was studying a lot. And just saying that five, it was like a huge.

The data from this research supports the idea that success breeds success. In addition to the successes outlined above, each of the boy’s submitted images of their scholarly identity that included some form of success. P.J.’s photo representing his scholarly identity was of him at his National Honor Society induction; Jay’s photograph was of him in his school uniform; and...
Danny’s was of him at his National Beta Club induction. Interestingly, two of the three participants identified being a part of a magnet program as a success. The third participant was in one of the most competitive programs in the city but did not name it as a current success even though maintaining matriculation in this program is challenging and is a success.

**Un Vistazo al Futuro: A Peek Into the Future**

The last theme that clearly came through in the data is the importance of access to role models. Each of the boys shared their aspirations for the future. Danny would like to:

work somewhere in the computer science industry, I was interested with knowing what computers can do it, I feel like that's kind of cool, just working on home, and I don't know, I just kind of got interested in that whole thing.

Jay also would like to:

get some job at a... I would say a tech company, but I've got quite a few connections already in the coding extracurriculars that I do, and I'd probably just try and get a good paying job at some big company like Microsoft or Google to be on some kind of innovation team of sorts for Microsoft or Google... Hopefully, Google, just because I'm sure that Google's innovation teams would be a lot more interesting to Microsoft, probably. Or maybe something like Amazon. Amazon's IT department is so cool. So cool. It's actually amazing.

P.J.’s favorite thing is:

just exploring and traveling and seeing things that I've never seen before, and especially in person, it's a whole different experience when you see something that you've never seen in person. So the path that I'm trying to take is to become a pilot for an airline. Being able to see the world that way, and fly planes, so I think that's where I would wanna see myself being an airline pilot.
P.J. can study aviation through his magnet program at his school. He also has access to extracurricular programs, such as summer programs, to further explore his interests. His aviation instruction and all of the pilots P.J. interacts with, through the extracurricular programs, are all role models for P.J. They provide a glimpse into the future P.J. dreams of living. Jay’s passion for coding has been fostered through extracurricular programs his mom signed him up for at a local community center. While Jay has had access to low level coding in his school, his skills are developed through the extracurricular coding classes he takes. Jay’s role models are those who lead the coding classes he attends as well as the media portrayal of innovators such as Google, Microsoft, and Amazon. Danny wants to be a computer scientist or analyst. Danny has limited access to computer courses through his magnet school. His role model however, is his sister’s boyfriend who is a computer scientist. Each of the participants’ have access to someone currently in their dream job. Through this access they can explore, ask questions, and ultimately develop a plan to success.

**Conclusion**

The current study examined the nature of the ethnic and scholarly identity of the high achieving, high school students who identify as Latinx and as boys. Further, it examined any connections between their ethnic and scholarly identities. The methods for collecting the data included photo elicitation and an interview. Three main themes emerged from the overall data collection. The three themes that emerged were the role of family in their identity development, success leads to more success, and the importance of role models. It was determined from the collected data that family plays a key role in identity development both ethnically and scholarly. What was most important to participants was the support and motivation their families provided. The support provided resources, access to opportunities, and motivation that provide the bedrock
for future success of these participants. Celebrating success in some public manner is important to continued achievement and role models demonstrate their goals are possible.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 5 includes a critical discussion of the findings that emerged from the data collected. Also included are a summary of the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research. Finally, relevance to the current literature will be discussed in this chapter.

Summary of the Study

The current study examined the nature of ethnic and scholarly identities in high achieving, high school students who identity as both boys and Latinx. The study further explored any potential interactions between these identities. The purpose of this study was to provide space for participant voice and experience, regardless of existing norms for their group, in a way such that teachers, schools, and teacher preparatory institutions can better prepare teachers to engage students and assist them in breaking the norms.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of ethnic and scholarly identity for high-achieving, high school, Latinx students who identify as a boy in a southern context?

2. How do high-performing high school Latinx students who identify as a boy view the connections between their identities?

The experiences of the participating boys in this current study ascertained the significance of the individual experience to their identity development and academic success. These experiences were captured through the methods utilized for this study: photo elicitation, an interview and a member check. The data collected from these methods produced three overall themes. Family played a key role in all the stories both in terms of ethnic identity development and scholarly achievement. Supporting and recognizing success positively affected all three participants’ experiences; and access to role models is the third commonality the boys identified.
as essential to their perseverance. All the boys could identity benefits from identifying as Latinx and being academically successful.

**Major Contributions**

Three themes emerged from the collected data of this qualitative study. The three major themes were: (1) Family played a key role in all the stories both in terms of ethnic identity development and scholarly achievement; (2) Supporting and recognizing success positively affected all three participants’ experiences; and finally (3) access to role models was a commonality the boys identified as essential to their perseverance. These themes emerged from an interview with each boy and the photographs they captured or identified to represent their ethnic and scholarly selves. The analysis of this study produced three important overarching findings: (1) Ethnic identity and their scholarly identities can coexist if there is a sense of belonging; (2) Parental educational attainment has not hindered participants success; and (3) Student academic self-concept is critical to academic achievement.

**Ethnic and Scholarly Identities Coexist through Belonging**

It was evident from the data collected that the participants viewed themselves through multiple lenses. The boys readily examined their ethnic identity and its evolution. Each of the boys participating in this study was born in the United States, which could complicate their ethnic identity development. Participants’ ethnic insights support the work of Fuligni et al. (2005) by evidencing their Latinx identity and American identities coexist. In this study, their ethnic identities are combined to generate a new and different identity that is relevant to their ethnic experience. These experiences identify their parents as the primary fund of cultural knowledge. Evidence from the study comprehensively supports the role of family and more specifically parents, in the ethnic identity formation. Family is the first experience of belonging many of us experience. As our world expands throughout adolescence, we seek out external
groups with whom we identify and can belong. People who identify as Latinx represent a wide array of Latinx cultures and not a single monolithic culture that stereotypes suggest. The roots of this diversity generate the beautiful variety of Latinx experiences and cultures, which are clearly supported in this study. This diversity of the Latinx culture creates opportunities for all members to experience a sense of belonging, even if individual experiences are unique. There was some evidence that fully embracing their ethnic identity at school was a new phenomenon and aligned with their matriculation to high school. Nonetheless, the nexus of their ethnic identity was their family.

Pivoting to examine their scholarly identities, the boys unanimously viewed their schools as very diverse. Through this diversity the boys were more comfortable embracing their ethnic identity within the academic sphere. While the boys named the diversity in their schools, they also explained they were often the only Latinx student in their classes. It is important to note that each of the boys felt comfortable embracing their ethnic identity, even if they were the only one in their classes. This supports the notion that the white-black binary should be viewed as the white–non-white/black binary. The boys felt comfortable in their diverse schools and the clearer description of the diversity of the schools is that students are predominantly non-white. More than half of each school population represented in this study is non-white. African Americans are the largest minority group in each of the schools. This non-white majority aided the boys in embracing their Latinx (non-white) ethnic identities which creates a feeling of belonging that is critical at this stage of adolescent development.

Interestingly the boys’ experiences also support the work of Nadia Flores-Gonzalez (2002) who explained:
minorities can and do find ways to achieve on their own without jeopardizing cultural or family affiliations…they have adopted a school-kid identity that is expressed in their different worlds. (p. 10)

Each of the boys have families who support and promote their school-kid identities. Perhaps more importantly, they all attend a magnet program that requires a sustained level of success to continue matriculation in the program. The expectation is to succeed in retaining your enrollment from year to year creating an expectancy of success. This expected success drives belonging and the evolution of the school-kid identity.

**The Past does not Predict the Future**

Parental educational attainment has consistently been found to predict educational outcomes for all children including childhood arrivals and native-born Latinos (Diaz-Strong & Ybarra, 2016, p. 284). **Contrary to Diaz-Strong & Ybarra (2016),** parental educational attainment has not hindered these participants’ success. Each of the boys shared their parents worked in manual labor jobs: roofing, managing a restaurant, custodial services. Meanwhile each of the boys have career aspirations, supported by their parents, that require university degrees. These careers include, a pilot, computer coding and innovation, and a computer scientist or analyst. Each require a post-secondary degree as well as industry certifications to develop and maintain their competitiveness in the job market. All of their parents, while not college graduates, support and even try to motivate their son’s success. Parental contributions to their son’s academic and career goals was essential to their success. The data evidenced motivational tactics. One such example from the data included one of the boys helping their parents at their job and grumbling about it how much he doesn’t like it. His parent’s reply, ‘do well, go to college so you have your choice of careers’. The data also evidenced support tactics. These include the sacrifices families make for the boys to attend their magnet programs. Each of the families have adults engaged in
labor intensive jobs that often have long hours. Nonetheless, they have all found ways to get the boys to and from school in a timely manner. They provide the extra supplies and materials to ensure the boys can complete projects and assignments. They also persisted in the sometimes-confusing course for understanding and gaining access to the magnet application process. The data in this study clearly evidences the success of the boys and the supportive roles their parents play in the process despite their parents’ experiences with school.

**You Have to Believe to Achieve**

Student academic self-concept is critical to academic achievement. Whiting supports “Bandura’s seminal theory on the role of self-efficacy including one’s self-image as a learner in the context of academic achievement, cannot be ignored or trivialized” (p. 224). The data bears this out in both the photos participants provided documenting their scholarly identity and their anecdotes of success in school. Two of the boys submitted post-initiation photos to a national honor society. The third provided a photo of himself in his school’s uniform. All the participants confidently shared they consider themselves smart and if they put their minds to something they would achieve it. The exuded confidence in an affirming rather than an egotistical manner.

The baseline of their success was admission to their magnet programs. They all understood the opportunity the magnet program provided and the culture of success that was perpetuated in each of their programs. The data also evidences experiences of falling behind and having to preserve through hard work to recovery. At each challenge, the participants believed they could achieve if they worked hard enough which supports Altshuler & Schmautz’s (2006) position. Altshuler & Schmautz (2006), cite Marsh (1990) explaining in considering “the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement is generally reciprocal” (p. 9). Therefore, student academic self-concept becomes critical to success. This has come through clearly in the data.
Whiting (2006) described minority scholars including the following “these students set realistic goals — they recognize and appreciate the importance of high grades, excellent school attendance, and the benefits of taking challenging courses (e.g., AP, IB and honors classes) in order to reach their goals” (p. 226). The collective data demonstrate the participants manifest all the characteristics Whiting sets forth. These boys were not deterred by the challenges and setbacks they encountered along their academic journey. They routinely sought out challenges both through the school curriculum and through extracurricular activities. Each of the boys described times when they thrived because of a teacher holding them to high expectations. Conversely, the data also evidenced the challenges of teachers with low expectations. Nonetheless, each of the boys believed they could succeed if they worked hard enough. The concept of work was a common understanding among participants. One shared that when he does not do as well as he wanted or doesn’t “win”, he views it as a need to rework and relearn rather than believing “it wasn’t meant to be”. Example after example, these participants own their academic prowess and know how to persevere and even rise from failure.

**Theoretical Applications**

The theoretical framework for this study was rooted in Constructionism. Jha (2012) asserts that constructionism upholds knowledge that is created by one’s interactions with their own experiences as well as co-created by interaction with others within a certain collective community (Cook, 2017). This study evidenced the role of others in the co-construction of the ethnic and scholarly identities of these high performing, Latinx, high school students who identify as a boy. Based on the evidence however, social constructionism is a more accurate frame. Social constructionism of knowledge acknowledges that people construct meanings of the same phenomenon in different ways (Crotty, 2015). Latinx young men in high school construct their ethnic and scholarly identities differently because their experiences are different. Their
perceptions and subsequent internalization of events may or may not resemble the perceptions and internalization of a peer in the same situation. Social constructionism accentuates knowledge is framed between participants in a social relationship (Cook, 2017).

At its core, this study sought to examine the construction of identity and what was evidenced was the influence of others throughout the process. This supports Stets and Burke’s explanation. Stets and Burke (2003) explained we need to recognize the role of society “in which the self is acting, and keep in mind that the self is always acting in a social context in which other selves exist” (p. 1). This was evidenced in the development of participants ethnic identity, their scholarly identity, and any interactions between the two. In considering identity development in minority students, race and ethnicity must also be considered. Each participant described their school as diverse but when asked how many other Latinx students are in their classes, their responses were none.

Latinx critical theory, is an extension to critical race theory that serves to provide specificity and voice to the experience of the Latinx community as a counter narrative to the black-white binary. The variety of experiences documented in this study supports the non-white experience that the Latinx community lives is apparent not only in the array of colors of skin but in their language, culture, origin, and status of citizenship. This study represented a multitude of perspectives that represent a variety of cultures and colors of skin and lived experiences.

Bringing the student voice to the core of this work also supports Yosso’s tenets. Yosso’s strength in applying critical race theory to examining cultural capital brings those who are traditionally excluded and silenced in academic research to the forefront and gives them voice, yielding power to the cultural experiences of communities of color to change the dialogue (Yosso, 2005).

The research findings of this study provide clear support of Yosso’s work on community cultural wealth. Specifically, there is clear support for four of the six forms of cultural capital
Yosso describes. Familial capital is the most clearly supported form of capital. Each of the participants identified and explained the roles of their familial support systems as key to their success. The boys’ identification of and interaction with role models, paired with their clear future plans of each participant provide evidence of aspirational capital. Students referred to the success of their peers at school as driving their motivation for future success evidencing the role of social capital. Finally, the participation of the boys in the study supports the role of linguistic capital through the stories the boys shared. Throughout the study, the participant’s voices provided clear pictures of their experience today and the influences over them. Each participant was grateful to participate and excited their experiences and insights would be considered.

**Implications**

The findings of this study had several implications that may be seen as significant. This study on the ethnic and scholarly identity development of high performing, high school students who identify as boys, has the potential to influence literature on reality pedagogy, urban school principals, urban teachers & aspiring teachers, marginalized families, and Latinx boys.

**Reality Pedagogy**

Reality pedagogy requires educators to recognize each student, where they are from, and the culture with which they identify as the starting point from which instruction begins (Emdin, 2016). This study challenged some tenets in research and supported others. The results however, pro or con, support the need to recognize student voice. The easiest way to combat our perceptions and ultimately our implicit bias’s is to root ourselves in our student’s experiences. Acknowledging micro-cultures and the mixing of cultures within the macro-cultural paradigms that our government and schools use to group people, empowers the coexistence of students’ ethnic identity and their scholarly identity. This study demonstrated when academic success is a cultural norm, such as in a magnet program, it can trump ethnic grouping. Belonging is validated
according to success. This study underscored the urgent need for principals, teachers, aspiring teachers, marginalized families, and even Latinx boys to intentionally develop ethnic and academic identities and to support perseverance.

The evolution of ethnic identity and the role of micro-cultures are critical to truly understanding minority students. Ethnic identity is deeply and profoundly connected to family. Thus, ignoring or excluding these micro-cultural experiences from the classroom is to ignore or exclude the student at the core. It is imperative that student voice be engaged and fostered in the classroom and beyond. Our current students are experiencing macro- and micro-culture in new and novel ways with which adults have limited experience. We must build appropriate and meaningful relationships with our students in order to truly engage them academically. The answer may well be reality pedagogy, especially in our evermore-connected world and changing landscape.

**Urban School Principals**

This study revealed opportunities for current principals, especially those serving urban schools. The principal is the chief culture manager. They are charged with the expectation of creating a positive school climate where all students grow. While this burden is shared across the learning community, it is the principal who leads the charge. They set the tone for school culture based on what they do or do not do. Proactively developing opportunities for faculty and staff to develop cultural competency and skills that support the inclusion of student voice is critical. Faculty and staff must embrace students for who they are and not who we think they are. Building appropriate and reciprocal relationships with students is the best way to engage their authentic voices. The principal must provide training opportunities for teachers to begin the journey of developing cultural competence. Cultural competence is not a destination, it is a
personal journey. Principals must lead this work and engage others in creating the environment where faculty and staff are willing to engage in such work.

Urban school principals should also consider how to create an environment that celebrates student success. Each of the participants reflected on the benefit and motivation they found in their schools’ attention to success. Inviting student voice into developing this atmosphere could also be beneficial. It is important to note that success had no one definition. Student success may be found in the classroom, in extracurricular endeavors such as athletics or clubs, and or other endeavors students undertake. The importance is the recognition across the spectrum of success and not in narrowly defined, exclusionary terms. For the students, the immersion in success positively focused their motivation for future success.

Urban School Teachers & Aspiring Teachers

Our students need the adults in their academic institutions to model how to be a constant learner and that begins with cultural competence development. Only through developing meaningful relationships with students guided by appropriate professional boundaries can we hope to move students ahead. Even our most supportive adults must be cautious not to project their inherent biases onto our students. Employing the strategies of reality pedagogy help prevent even the most well-meaning person from falling into action based on their inherent bias’s. It is critically important to build self-efficacy in students. This begins with helping students own their learning. Creating opportunities for students to experience self-created success feeds the development of self-efficacy.

Teachers should also explore how to include student voice into their curriculum and planning. Student perspectives are key to their engagement in class. Considering the micro-cultural experiences student live which may be significantly different from the macro-cultural stereotypes with which they are associated, teachers must be every vigilant of their implicit
biases that insidiously seep into the instructional environment. Considering the cultural capital through Yosso’s lens of community cultural wealth will help teachers monitor their own implicit bias by striving to identify the assets students bring to class and then how they contribute to the learning environment.

**Marginalized Families**

This study underscored the importance of family in the pursuit of academic success. Familial support of the student was named P.J., Jay, and Danny. They identified how their families contributed to their success in non-traditional ways. Too often schools focus on how families come to school and contribute, but that is built on a premise that parents are available during school hours. Many of our marginalized families are working and juggling multiple responsibilities to meet the basic needs of their family. This in no way means the family is not engaged in the student’s success. The school and parents need to understand that parents can be supportive, even if not present in the school building. Parents also need to understand that their educational attainment is not predictive of their child’s success. It is their support that will enable their children to achieve. Encouraging their children, providing for what they need for school without a barrage of questions, and modeling perseverance all contributed to the academic self-efficacy and success of their children. The data from this study demonstrated how important these familial supports are to students.

**Latinx Boys**

The boys in this study served as co-researchers and activists. Through their participation in the study, they shared their stories and built confidence in sharing their stories. More importantly, the study was an opportunity for students to practice using their voices and the boys were excited that others wanted to hear their voices. Their photos helped the students reflect on experiences and which stories they would share. After participating in the study, the boys shared
their experiences more freely with two asking if they could recruit their friends to participate in
the study and another who shared his experiences with a teacher. The participants’ actions during
and after the study demonstrate the positive effects on the students. Encouraging more boys to
share their stories and to a wider audience is a key takeaway. Helping the students find their
voice and locating platforms to share their experiences is important to their identity development.
The more the boys shared their stories, the more they owned them. Latinx boys have important
insights and need opportunities to share these insights.

Developing their ability to reflect can also be linked to developing critical consciousness
and in teens who are still maturing and developing, it could be considered an ideal time to build
this consciousness. The value of developing metacognition benefits the boys within the study but
also holds potential for the boys to continue to benefit for years to come.

**Recommendations for Future Research Studies**

This study attempted to enhance the research literature and address the gap in the
research regarding the nature of ethnic and scholarly identity in high achieving, Latinx high
school students who identify as boys. Future research can also benefit this study as well. This
study included three high performing high school students who identified as Latinx and boys.
Additional insight could be collected if provided across a longer timeline of research. Additional
interviews with each participant would also provide additional insights especially over an
extended period of time. The relationships between research and participant would grow and
yield increased confidence and transparency. Additional time also yields more experiences which
could inform the study. The study also focused on high school students who were just beginning
to fully embrace their ethnic identities. Future research could examine the insights of college-age
boys who may have more experiences from which to draw. Boys that participated in this study
can provide insight informing ethnic and scholarly identities can coexist and not impact scholastic achievement. Self-efficacy is developed over time and before students employ self-efficacy, they see it modeled by those adults who the student holds in high regard.

All the participating boys in this study named parents and familial support as critical to their success. These parents are not college educated, work in manual labor jobs, but are a major source motivation. A future study on the role of the families in first generation college students would be beneficial in curbing high school dropouts and in building practices that develop the scholarly identity from a young age. Whiting (2006) asserted “developing a scholar identity should begin as early as possible and our efforts must be ongoing; becoming a scholar is a lifelong process” (p. 223). The more we can learn about what supports this development could provide clear guidance to schools, teacher and leader preparatory programs, and family engagement initiatives.

A replication of this study in different regions of the country could also yield greater insights to the student experience. Examining student experiences in other regions of the country will include communities at varying experience levels in supporting marginalized families. The experiences in a community along a boarder or near a port may have a different support infrastructure when compared to areas of the country that are experiencing growth in their Latinx population as a new endeavor. As the job market demands additional support for new infrastructure developments, access to jobs requires some manual laborers to move to follow the job opportunities. This creates the opportunities for new areas of the country to expand and support burgeoning Latinx communities with limited resources which may affect student experiences.
Conclusion

The goal of this study was to create space for student voices in exploring the nature of ethnic and scholarly identity in high achieving, high school Latinx students who identity as boys. This study has offered insights into this fragile group of high performing Latinx boys for which there is a limited amount of information. This study documents insights and experiences of boys meeting the research criteria and the data illustrate a picture different from the data. While Latinx high school boys are most at risk for dropping out of high school, participants in this student demonstrate they are thriving in their schools and have future aspirations that do not include dropping out, but rather going to college. Despite the challenges that exist in standardized testing that can enable access to magnet programs, each of these participants have overcome these barriers and are thriving. In fact, admission to the magnet program appeared to validate the boys’ opinions of their academic success. Each of the boys named admission into the magnet program and the work they did to remain enrolled in the program as a major success. Admission to these accelerated programs may well be the public validation that contributes to their academic invulnerability. Each of the boys emanated a sense of pride aligned with their enrollment in a magnet program. Sustained enrollment in the magnet program established a baseline of success from which they would continue to grow.

The data from this study also demonstrated that ethnic and scholarly identities can peacefully coexist. Students who enroll in diverse schools have space for both their ethnic identities and their scholarly identities. Enrolling in a magnet program may provide additional space for ethnicity since the entrance requirements document a certain, equitable level of success among those enrolled. Across the participant responses, all recognized the need to work hard and to persevere to succeed. Creating opportunities for students to share their experiences, thoughts, and opinions is the best source of information from which to plan. Each of the participants
leaned into the conversation and shared a variety of perspectives. These insights may help inform how to work with other students in similar situations. They also evidenced a level of academic invulnerability so when the boys got behind, they knew how to recover and thrive. The boys knew how to manage their education and how to leverage resources to help them if needed. The boys also mention being surrounded by success as being highly motivating. One of the schools in which the boys are enrolled celebrates a wide range of student success publicly. Two of the participants explained how motivating it is to be surrounded by so much success. While at times it could add pressure, the boys could self-correct acknowledging they had strengths and did not have to do everything their peers do.

Participants identified isolated benefits and challenges to identifying as Latinx and being academically successful. Whether it was an advantage because they spoke Spanish at home and it was the language they studied at school, or a challenge because both parents work and motivation is up to the student, there was no pattern of benefit or challenge established. Additionally, participants could not identify patterns of challenges because they identified as both Latinx and are academically successful. Participants expressed they have seen a change in society that is more accepting of non-white ethnic groups. This may be in part due to the school makeup at both institutions are majority non-white. This study has challenged some research and validated other pieces of literature. Hopefully the future will lead researchers to further explore the success of high achieving Latinx boys to inform how we can support other Latinx boys in order to reduce the dropout rates.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Informational Flyer

**URBAN TEEN PHOTOVOICE PROJECT**

**EXITOSOS A PESAR DE TODO**

A participatory action research project with high achieving, Latinx high school students who identify as boys.

Alyssa Villarreal
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Research Questions

1. What is the nature of ethnic and scholarly identity for high-achieving high school Latinx students who identify as male in a southern context?

2. How do high-performing high school Latinx students who identify as male view the connections between identities?

Participant's Role:

- Participate in a Research Orientation Session
- Capture 3-5 relevant photos
- Participate in a series of interviews on your photos
- Review final write up to ensure accuracy of your voice.
- Boost your College resume!

Your participation will be kept anonymous in this study. Please select a a name by which I may refer to you without revealing your identity.

Photograph Composition:

Consider this, if you had to represent yourself in a series of photographs designed to highlight your ethnicity and scholarly aspects of self what would those images contain? Capture a series of photos that represent your ethnic and scholarly identity. Feel free to capture many images so you will be able to later select the top 3-5 images you would like to share.

Reminders:

- Capture images that are meaningful to you - If you capture people remember to ask permission first!
- Avoid anything that could identify you or others (If identifying objects/people are captured they will not be published).
- Feel free to take many photos so you are later able to select your top 3-5 images
Appendix B: Parental Consent

Consent to Participate in a Research Study


WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

Your teen is being invited to take part in a research study about Ethnic And Scholar Identity For High-Achieving High School Latina Students Who Identify As Male In A Southern Context. They are being invited to take part in this research study because:
- he is high-achieving
- he is enrolled in grades 9-12
- he identifies as a boy and as Latina

If they volunteer to take part in this study, they will be one of up to five people locally to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is Alyse Villareal (Lead Investigator, LI) of University of Memphis Department of Instruction and Curriculum Leadership. She is being guided by Dr. Beverly Cross.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to focus on the Nature of Ethnic and Scholar Identity for High-Achieving High School Latina Students Who Identify as Male in a Southern Context.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is very low physical risk to taking part in this study. Participants' names and any personal information will be held in confidentiality and destroyed. All interviews will be away from school sites so that there is no impact on school or peer image.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The research procedures will be conducted at a location of participants' choice in the local community as long as it is not a K-12 public school. The total amount of time they will be asked to volunteer for this study is five hours over the next 25 days. There is an additional task of capturing photos and reflecting on the photos they capture that may take an estimated one to four additional hours.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

Teens will be asked to participate in five (5) one-hour interviews as well as capture photos and reflect on the photos prior to the first interview. They will be asked to submit photos and reflections electronically. One copy will be retained by the researcher for note-taking and analysis.
WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

To the best of our knowledge, the things they will be doing have no more risk of harm than they would experience in everyday life.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

By participating in this study, teens will receive a $25 iTunes gift card for completing the study. This is prorated to $5 per interview if they choose to leave the study early.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If your teen decides to take part in the study, it should be because they really want to volunteer. They will not lose any benefits or rights they would normally have if they choose not to volunteer. They can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights they had before volunteering. If they choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected up to that point will still be used in the study.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If your teen does not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs for your teen to participate.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Teens will receive a $25 iTunes card for completing this study. The amount received will be pro-rated based on how many rounds you complete. They will receive $5 per round of interviews. The card will be issued after their last interview.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

We will make every effort to keep confidential all records that identify your teen to the extent allowed by law.

Your teen’s information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When I write about the study to share it with other researchers, I will write about the combined information we have gathered. They will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your teen’s name and other identifying information private. Your teen will choose a pseudonym which will be used for data analysis and any future publications.

I will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that your teen gave us information, or what that information is. All documents, recordings, and transcripts will be kept in a locked safe in my home unless being analyzed for study findings.
I will keep private all research records that identify your teen to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to share their information with other people if the information indicates any illegal or harmful activity. Also, we may be required to share information which identifies your teen to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Memphis.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If your teen decides to take part in the study, they still have the right to decide at any time that they no longer want to continue. They will not be treated unfairly if they decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to withdraw your teen from the study. This may occur if they are not able to follow the directions given to them, if researchers find that your teen’s participation in the study is more risk than benefit to your teen, or if the agency funding the study decides to stop the study early for a variety of scientific reasons. There are no consequences if your teen withdraws from the study.

ARE YOU PARTICIPATING OR CAN YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANOTHER RESEARCH STUDY AT THE SAME TIME AS PARTICIPATING IN THIS ONE?

Your teen may take part in this study if they are currently involved in another research study. It is important to let the investigator know if your teen is in another research study. They should also discuss with the investigator before your teen agree to participate in another research study while your teen is enrolled in this study.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to allow your teen to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Alyssa Villareal at (901) 34-6871. If you have any questions about your teen’s rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Institutional Review Board staff at the University of Memphis at 901-678-2705. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

WHAT IF NEW INFORMATION IS LEARNED DURING THE STUDY THAT MIGHT AFFECT YOUR DECISION TO PARTICIPATE?

If the researcher learns of new information in regards to this study, and it might change your willingness to stay in this study, the information will be provided to you. You may be asked to sign a new informed consent form if the information is provided to you after you have joined the study.

What happens to my privacy if I am interviewed?

This research study requires five rounds of interviews. During the first interview you will choose a pseudonym which will be used in data collection and the final written representation of the data. Any identifying information provided during the interview such as work location, personal relationships, names of people or places will be omitted from the final publication and will NOT be shared with anyone. The researcher, Alyssa Villareal, will discuss findings with the faculty advisor, Dr. Cross, but no identifying information will be distributed in any form.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?
Appendix C: Teen Assent Form

I am doing a study to learn about high achieving, Latinx teen boys in the south view their ethnic and scholar identity. I am asking you to help because we don’t know very much about whether kids your age and ethnicity view their ethnic and scholar identities.

If you agree to be in my study, I am going to ask you to take some photos that you feel represent your ethnic and scholar identities. I will ask you some questions about the photographs and their representations. I want to know about your opinions and experiences as they relate to how you experience your ethnicity and academic success. For example, I will ask you to tell me about a time when you had to identify your ethnicity, how did you identify, and why?

You can ask questions about this study at any time. If you decide at any time not to finish, you can ask me to stop.

The questions I will ask are only about what you think. There are no right or wrong answers because this is not a test.

You will a $25 iTunes card for completing this study. The amount received will be pro-rated based on how many rounds you complete. You will receive $5 per round of interviews. The card will be issued after your last interview.

If you sign this paper, it means that you have read this and that you want to be in the study. If you don’t want to be in the study, don’t sign this paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you don’t sign this paper or if you change your mind later.

Your signature ___________________________ Date ____________

Your printed name: ___________________________ Date ____________

Signature of person obtaining consent: ___________________________ Date ____________

Printed name of person obtaining consent: ___________________________ Date ____________

Adapted from: Cornell University 198
Appendix D: Interview Series Guide

Interview Introduction
AV: The following questions will allow me to have a better understanding of your photographs and any messages you may hope they communicate or not communicate. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential.

Warm up Questions about composition: (Repeat for each photo)
1. Please select one of your photos and tell me about the photograph.

2. What is the title and caption this photo?

3. Tell me the story of what inspired you to take this shot.

4. Tell me the story of what aspect of your life led you to capture this shot?

5. What do you think this image communicates about you? What do you hope it communicates about you?

Interview 1: Questions about ethnic identity
6. Tell me about a time when you had to identify your ethnicity. How did you identify and why?

7. Is there a photo you took that supports this view? (If so, tell me which one and how it relates; if not, why do you think that is?).

8. Tell me a story that illustrates your experience of what it is like to identify as ________?

9. Tell me about who or what has influenced your views of your ethnicity? Tell me about a time that stands out as a cornerstone moment in your relationship.

10. Tell me about the benefits or challenges you perceive associated with identifying as ______________? Can you tell me a story about a time when you feel your ethnicity benefitted or worked against you?

11. Tell me what you value most about your ethnicity and why?

Interview 2: Questions about scholarly identity
12. Tell me about how you view yourself academically. Can you tell me about a time when you felt particularly successful in school?

13. Is there a photo you took that supports this view? (If so, tell me which one and how it relates; if not, why do you think that is?).

14. Tell me about your experiences with academic success.
15. Tell me about the benefits or challenges you perceive associated with being academically successful? Can you tell me a story about a time when you feel your success benefitted or worked against you?

16. What has contributed to your academic success? Is there anything you had to overcome?

17. Imagine it is 2030. Tell me about your ideal life you hope to be living.

**Interview 3: Questions about intersectionality**

18. Tell me about how you view the connection, if any, between your ethnicity and academic success?

19. Tell me about a time when you think you benefitted from being ______ and academically successful.

20. Tell me about a time when you think experienced challenges that you believe stem from being ______ and academically successful.

21. What advice would you give to other students who are similar to you?

**Interview 4: Member checking/Concluding Questions**

22. Is there something that you may not have thought about before that occurred to you during these interviews?

23. Is there anything else you think I should know to better understand your position?

24. Is there anything you’d like to ask me?

**Potential Probing Questions:**

- Would you tell me more about that?

- What else has contributed, effected, etc.?

- Could you please clarify that?