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Alternative Interventions Used to Help Mexican-American Students Improve Academic Achievement in Grades 9 - 12

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By

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research study employing a cross-case analysis on previous case studies is to better understand the engagement of Latino students in a small number of cultural sensitivity programs and the teaching practices that are factors in the development of their academic achievement. In the traditional infrastructure of public schools, assimilation is built on fundamental values aligned with the U.S. political establishment rather than on the value of adaptation to the demands and conflicts of other cultures. Thus, less-empowered groups are at a disadvantage resulting in subgroups abandoning their ideas and reducing their contributions to human capital. In this study, the focus is alternative programs, specifically programs in which a there is a balance in the learning process between the teacher and student emphasizing the development of enhanced understanding of the cultural contexts an integral part of academic learning for Mexican American students. Also included in the case studies are innovative intervention programs that specifically help students improve academic achievement in Grades 9–12, especially those for students who are Mexican immigrants or of Mexican American ancestry in the state of California. The literature discusses concepts of assimilation, enculturation, oppression, culture capital, and the high and low contexts within the theoretical framework. Empirical literature revealed a deeper understanding of the relationship between Latino student learning styles and the dominant Eurocentric traditional academic culture within classroom practices. In sum, in the cross-case analysis of the 21 case studies, various features emerged across the cases that were categorized into three general themes: (a) alternative interventions, (b) caring, and (c) culturally responsive teaching/pedagogy.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Mexican American students consistently score lower on test scores, translating to lower grades, and higher dropout rates than their peers of other ethnicities. This epidemic is leaving an entire generation of Mexican American students under educated. This phenomenon requires further investigation into meaningful interventions addressing the education gap between student Mexican Immigrants and those of Mexican ancestry and students with other ethnic backgrounds. Even if the blame for poor academic results in Mexican American students lies with parents, teachers, policies, and others in addressing U.S. public education dropout rates, teachers are confronted in the classroom with students testing at low grade level and the pressures to meet state requirements. Vigdor (2008) contends that Mexican immigrants "show evidence of assimilating very slowly" (p. 25) into mainstream American society when compared with other contemporary immigrant groups. According to the research on nationwide dropout rates, the Hispanic population has a 22.8% high school dropout rate, and students who are Mexican immigrants or of Mexican American ancestry, a subgroup of the Hispanic population, have a high school dropout rate of 25.5% in comparison to 7.2% White Americans and 11.6% Black Americans (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Students who are Mexican immigrants or have Mexican American ancestry are overwhelming behind Anglo American students in academic achievement. English only education enacted through policies intensifying Anglo-American racial and ethnicity ideologies employs a climate of educational inequity. In some capacity, the poor results in school and in student learning reflect a one-size-fits-all education policy that is prevalent in the American school system. Over the years, subtractive language and Mexican home culture

challenged students to face events that increasingly promote conflict between formal and informal education. Any positive results from programs targeting students who are Mexican immigrants or of Mexican Americans have been seemingly undermined by high dropout rates and a lack of funding to develop and sustain successful programs in academic achievement.

Many Mexican immigrants or those who have Mexican American ancestry are leaving high school without earning a high school diploma. The scope of the problem and trend of high dropout rate is indicative of a system of structural violence (Garcia-Reid, P., 2008). Though no single factor explains the underpinning of the problem, the theory of structural violence by Johan Galtung (1978) refers to social system created by members of power instating their social position, into a position of established authority leaving others of different backgrounds alienated from higher rank decision-making. This is a social formation that embeds constraints on human growth that is influenced by economic and political structure that directly or indirectly promotes a position of educational inequality (Garcia-Reid, P., 2008). The reproduction of the dominant culture creates a greater ability to instill their beliefs and practices into the framing of the educational curriculum that permits teachers to project similar linguistic and cultural practices. In other words, public schools are armed in academic programs on mechanisms by which structural violence occurs that are less visible in the processes that disengage or undermine Latino students to follow similar outcomes as previous generations (Galtung, 1990; Garcia-Reid, 2008).

One can argue the central conflict in the classroom in academic achievement is the result of cultural differences, a society that has a growing number of multicultural

populations but maintains traditional Eurocentric values dominating the education system. The fact remains that it is a shared problem in the educational gap regarding high school completion. In the formal education of students who are Mexican immigrants or of Mexican American ancestry, less emphasis has been placed on the Hispanic/Latino subgroup that represents a significant part in American history and could provide cultural context linking the rich background of the student's home culture and schooling culture. This neglect suggests a message of reduced inequalities in the relationship between the students' self-identity and academic learning.

Culture is a fundamental part of conflict and conflict resolution. Failure to acknowledge the significance of cultural factors when interpreting the high school dropout epidemic makes it more difficult to find a resolution to this growing issue. The problem of a lack of mutual understanding between the public school culture and Hispanic students' home culture delays attempts at resolving the conflict of formally educating students who are Mexican immigrants or of Mexican American ancestry. In the traditional infrastructure of public schools, assimilation is built on fundamental values aligned with the U.S. political establishment rather than on adaptation to the demands and conflicts of other cultures. Cultures are like underground veins that run through lives that form into a collection of similar characteristics that bind a group of individuals together. These beliefs are displayed with cultural messages from their perspective group what is meaningful and important cognitive and behavioral cultural contexts. Culture shapes our understanding and how we relate to conflict and unify with others. Culture is historically multi-layered, what appears on the surface may mask differences that run-deep below the surface. Thus, layers of historical culture for the less-empowered groups are at a

disadvantage, resulting in subgroups abandoning their ideas and reducing their contributions to human capital often unconsciously influenced by assimilation. Cultural influences and identities are an important component in context. When cultural identity is being threatened or misunderstood, the outcome of the reaction may become more important than the cultural identity and this focus may become the matter of the context and conflict. With this fixed, narrow identity pushes an area of discourse, conflict does not leave, it is always present at some degree – sometimes intense or unnoticed as streams running undetected until it runs against the flow of different pathways into changing patterns. Though culture is intertwined with conflict, some methods to conflict resolution minimizes cultural influences in presenting alternative approaches in acknowledging culture and bringing cultural fluency into the conflict of formal education. Accepting cultural dialogue to conflict into formal education can aid students and teachers make more choices in dealing with the high school dropout epidemic of students who are Mexican immigrants or of Mexican American ancestry.

While both terms are used Hispanic and Latino that refers to different subgroups. The term Hispanic has been systematically used as the main identifier of this ethnic group in demographic or statistical classifications, literature, articles, and other writings and has often been used interchangeably with Latino for Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Central American subgroups. In this study, the term *Latino* is used in place of *students among Mexican immigrants or of Mexican American ancestry* and *Mexican*, except in situations where Mexican is required to emphasize a statement of importance in relationship to their history, education, or social issues. However, this generalization has resulted in limiting the uniqueness of each subgroup through combining the subjects of

this study into one major group with the assumption that the data are limited by subgroup. Therefore, for consistency, Latino is used as the generic term from present and forward and Mexican is used in historical contexts and in emphasizing certain points.

Statement of the Problem

The high Latino (Hispanic) dropout rate has significant consequences for civic and social issues (Houston, Suh, & Suh, 2007; LaGana, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 1998). The focus on numbers in terms of educational outcomes has resulted in little attention being paid to the human factor of culture-specific learning processes among Latino students. Since, Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American student dropout rate is 25.5% meaning only 74.5% of Latino students complete high school from a traditional education or alternative school. It is not clear what percentage of students attends alternative programs related to cultural sensitivity to complete their high school diploma. Graduating high school, while not a guarantee for a good job, is an important accomplishment, and graduates have a better chance of contributing to society than students who drop out of high school.

Context

In this study, the focus is on alternative programs, specifically programs in which a balance in the learning process between teacher and student is achieved by developing a greater understanding of and emphasis on cultural context for Latino students. Also included are innovative intervention programs designed specifically to help students improve academic achievement in Grades 9–12, especially Latino students residing in the state of California.

This study is a qualitative study employing a cross-case analysis of case studies published in dissertations from January 1999 to December 2010. The data collection method was accomplished through accessing the ProQuest database to select existing case studies focused on the state of California in Grades 9–12. Through this approach, certain predictors were found that indicated successful strategies in helping Latino students to succeed. The purposeful selection of case studies resulted in determining the extent to which these predictors reflect effective teaching and the conditions under which they are effective for Latino students in Grades 9–12.

This method was useful in connecting teaching styles or practices to student's academic results and in identifying successful predictors that might not have been recognized otherwise. This type of research was also important for finding features in alternative programs that resulted in Latino students being more engaged and challenged. The literature discussion on concepts of assimilation, enculturation, oppression and culture capital, and the high and low contexts within the theoretical framework and empirical literature revealed a deeper understanding of the relationship between Latino student learning styles and the dominant Eurocentric traditional academic culture within classroom practices.

Purpose of this Study

The first goal of this research study is to better understand the performance of Latino students in alternative programs sensitive to their culture and the effects of teaching practices in the development of these students academic achievement. Second, this research was conducted to contribute to the current thinking on cultural tolerance in formal education and to identify the need for cultural awareness in order to build Latino

student's self-confidence within academic settings. Third, this study was conducted to re-address the inherit ethnicity of Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry, which is closely woven within the fabric of their academic achievement. In all, this research study was conducted to identify successful culture-specific educational strategies offered through alternative interventions in which the differences between the home culture and academic learning were acknowledged. This shift in thinking appears to be the most relevant approach to understanding cultural differences and the differing views of between high- and low-context cultures. Although the interpretation of findings is not without challenges, the alternative approaches implemented in several high schools with high percentages of Latino students should result in an expansion of knowledge concerning the social influences that exist between the rapidly growing diverse population and the traditional Eurocentric academic establishment.

Significance of This Study

In this study, several cases were synthesized to construct a broader scope of understanding related to cultural learning differences and to construct a dialogue generating an open debate on genuine differences in academic learning. In addition, the study shows the importance of a higher value being placed on developing teaching strategies and effective instruction in cultural contexts associated with the aim of improving academic achievement and lowering the Latino dropout rate.

Definition of Terms

The terms that follow have often been used in the educational environment but generally not used in the social sciences in terms of conflict resolution. The definitions of

these key terms are based on the California Department of Education (2011) standardized definitions, unless otherwise stated.

1. The *Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID)* program for Grades 6–12 is aimed at students with grade point averages of B, C, or D who have the desire to go to college and are willing to meet the demands of the program. Students are placed in rigorous curricula to increase their chances of enrolling in colleges or universities. The goal of the program is to close the achievement gap through preparing all students, especially minorities, rural students, and low-income students, to succeed in a global society.
2. The *Academic Performance Index (API)* reports contain information that indicates whether public schools meet state requirements.
3. *A-G Requirements* are courses required for high school graduation and college admission. Within the California Education Code, minimum courses and credit requirements have been established for graduation from California high schools.
4. The *Puente* program (2011) for Mexican American or Latino students was created to increase the number of minorities who attend colleges or universities. In the Puente program, a considerable amount of attention is given to instruction in reading and writing and to academic counseling and mentoring. Initially, the goal was to interface the Mexican culture associated with *familia* to the instruction; but the growth of the program resulted in changing the target population to all students, weakening some of the association with *familia* in terms of the Mexican culture.

Research Questions

Latino students have higher dropout rates and lower grades in comparison with other major groups. This could be because Latino students have learning requirements not met in the traditional classroom culture. With the increasing Latino student population, the need for culturally sensitive programs has also grown. In this study, the focal and leading question was as follows: How should classroom instruction be changed to address the differences between a traditional classroom culture and the cultural context of students who are from Latino background to improve academic achievement?

Three additional questions were identified based on the focal question:

1. What features in cultural sensitivity programs are helpful to teachers in improving the learning ability of Latino students in Grades 9–12?
2. What key predictors are associated with culturally specific programs that indicate the effects of culture on students consistent academic improvement; and, what are the effects of a high-context culture in effective instruction for Latino students in stimulating student learning and improving scores in statewide testing?
3. What alternative instructional approach is necessary to facilitate recognizing and resolving different points of views among Latino students?

Overview of the Chapters

Chapter 2 provides a literature review on the theory of cultural topics as well as empirical literature relevant to research questions. The literature review is divided into nine sections: Latino People, Mexican History, Schooling, Funds of Knowledge,

Enculturation, Assimilation, High-Context and Low-Context Cultures, Cultural Context, and Cultural Capital. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Chapter three includes details of applying a cross-case analysis to previous case studies as a qualitative research approach that was used in this study to better understand how Latino students engage in cultural sensitivity programs. This chapter has been organized into three sections: Design, Theoretical Findings, and an in-depth discussion concerning data collection. Chapter four discusses the data analysis of the cross-case analysis of the 21 case studies, and the chapter details the three themes that emerged: (1) alternative interventions, (2) caring, and (3) culturally responsive teaching/pedagogy. Finally, chapter five includes a discussion and details the implications of the study.

CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature

This study was focused on attributes that are contributing factors to the academic achievement of Latino students. In chapter 1, the nature of the study was discussed; and the student achievement gap of Latinos in traditional high school environments was introduced. The research questions were related to the relationship between learning and academic achievement of Latino students in Grades 9–12.

In chapter 2, the literature review focuses on the theory concerning various cultural topics and empirical literature relevant to the research questions. This chapter has been organized to first discuss Latino people and Mexican history to understand that the progressive nature of their culture, the largest subgroup and the primary group in California, specificity in documents might be open to interpretation where those documents include references to Latinos or Hispanics. These sections are followed with relevant discussion of the concepts of assimilation, enculturation, oppression, culture capital, and high and low context. The theoretical framework and empirical literature at times have been interconnected to bring out a deeper understanding of Mexican or Latino culture and Eurocentric traditional academic settings.

The Latino People

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), from 2000 to 2010 the Hispanic/Latino population grew 43%. By 2050, the Hispanic population of the United States is projected to be 102.6 million persons, 24.4% of the entire population (US Census Bureau, 2008). Although predications may not come to fruition, the Latino (Hispanic) population, defined as Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Central Americans, is currently been the fastest growing minority group in America. The

corresponding increase in student population diversity, especially Latino students, has affected the cultural composition of classrooms.

Statistics for Latino academic performance in formal education, "institutionalized learning" (Hall, 1989, p. 190), revealed a dropout rate of 21.4%, compared with the Anglo American dropout rate of 5.3% and the African American rate of 8.4% (NCES, 2007). The U.S. education system has continued to experience dramatic changes because of an influx of immigrants, particularly of Latino immigrants of Mexican origin. Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry are the majority (64%) of the subgroups within the US Hispanic population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). In California alone, which is the focus of this study, the Latino population is 36% of the total population compared with 15.1% of the national population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). The majority of the California Latino population (78%) is composed of Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Therefore, the increasing number of Latino students currently in the public school system should have resulted in more research on Latino (Hispanic) education (Pursley, 2002). American society increasing growth of multiculturalism, especially the growth of Latino student population, is increasingly important to the social well-being of the United States. The barriers in low academic achievement attainment are problematic for Latino students. The lack of their language and culture is all but ignored as learning source in educational development (Valdivieso, 1990). The future research in specialized educational programs may be considered only in terms of measurements of performance in schools rather than on different approaches to address cultural differences to serve the underrepresented groups in student learning processes.

Formal education, more than ever, has been linked to employment and higher-paying jobs (NCES, 2003a). High school dropouts were "more than likely to be unemployed and earn less" (NCES, 2003a, p.42) than high school graduates. Although the achievement gap between Hispanic and mainstream White middle-class students was troubling to many educators, the continual outcome for Hispanics was that they were "more likely to be placed in remedial general education tracks, and more often incorrectly assessed as being mentally retarded or learning disabled" (Fletcher & Navarette, 2003, p. 38).

A main indicator of performance to determine if a student had a learning disorder was state standardized benchmarks. Because most teachers in public schools were White, middle-class women, they simply either "fail[ed] to differentiate" (Fletcher & Navarette, 2003, p. 41) between underachievement as measured by standardized benchmarks and cultural differences or were unaware of the deficits that can become a "more complex situation as the student . . . possesses poor self-esteem, decreased motivation, . . . and little interest in school with resulting problems of academic underachievement" (Fletcher & Navarette, 2003, p. 42) that Hispanic students may have brought with them into the classroom. Teacher's repeatedly incorrectly interpreted behaviors validated in Hispanic student's homes or out-of-school environments and judged these behaviors as not meeting the teacher's expectations of classroom behavior (Aroe & Nelson, 2000).

In California, according to the ethnic distribution over a 10-year period ending with the 2008–2009 school year, the population of Hispanic/Latino K–12 students grew while those of White and African American K–12 students declined (California K–12 Students, 2010) indicating that teachers of diversity were likely to be in short supply.

Cultural mismatch in between teaching style and learning style might be a possible factor that affects the misunderstanding of cultural differences in learning development. Though no teaching style is guaranteed to fully reach each student's educational attainment, teachers who are paired with same ethnicity, teachers are more likely to recognize and address appropriately student education learning development (Tyler, 2002). California's economic downturn resulted in decreased state funds, the educational budget for Grades K–12 was reduced by approximately $8 billion for the fiscal year 2009–2010 (Department of Finance–California, 2009). Therefore, any increase in Latino academic success could be in jeopardy due to budget constraints. The cutbacks in California and the declining U.S. financial economy effects could be contributory factors in reducing the access Latino students have to academic support from teachers.

Adding to the difficult situation of Latino students is the educational climate of accountability, standardized tests, and the No Child Left Behind Act all generated because of the current political climate (Casanova, 2003). Latino students have consistently scored lower on standardized tests than White, middle-class students have (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006), which aligns with the disparity in test performance between White, middle-class students and African American students since 1969. This particular achievement gap has affected students from different ethnicities throughout their educational careers. For example, the average SAT score for Latino students is 927; for White, middle-class students, it is 1,054 (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006). Many educators, looking at the seemingly unmovable gap, have argued that the tests must be implicitly discriminatory and that such built-in, almost unacknowledged discrimination has "far-reaching consequences for Hispanic and other students of ethnic minority

heritage" (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 4). A low socioeconomic background has often been cited as a predictor of poor academic success (Houston et al., 2007; LaGana, 2004) and as a cause for students dropping out of high school.

In a recent study published by the *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, researchers found that the brains of low-income children differ in ways critical for problem solving and creativity (Kishiyama, Boyce, Jimenez, Knight, & Perry, 2009):

> Neurophysiological evidence that social inequalities are associated with alterations in PFC [prefrontal cortex] function in LSES [low socioeconomic status] children. There are a number of factors associated with LSES rearing conditions that may have contributed to these results such as greater levels of stress and lack of access to cognitively stimulating materials and experiences. (pp. 1106–1115)

In sum, the position of Hispanic/Latino students in the American education system has been and remains in serious condition and has worsened in several significant ways since 1990. Yet, even though segregation by socioeconomic status and ethnicity has returned and the system has been influenced by tests that appear to be culturally biased, many Americans have continued to believe that the educational prospects for African Americans and Hispanics are improving. Fifty percent of all Americans surveyed believed that integration is a good thing not only for minority students but for all students (Orfield, 2001). Furthermore, a "strong majority" of Americans believe that "desegregation improves education" for African Americans and Latinos borne out by the fact that "almost all of the Black and Latino students who made it into (elite law schools) came from integrated educational backgrounds" (Orfield, 2001, p. 9).

Mexican History

Social capital, from a sociology perspective, is the result of functions or networks within an interaction in a social relationship (Valenzuela, 1999). However, social capital does not necessarily result in a supportive social network that reflects social reality. In Mexican history, the Spanish colonization over 300 years affected the development of Mexican culture in both religion and language. Mexicans are strongly identified with the Spanish language and Catholicism. Indian local cultural identities were categorized at smaller scale of cultural identity. Because of the cohabitation of the indigenous people of Mexico with the Spanish through either force or persuasion, it became almost "impossible for the most learned and experienced ethnologist to classify or determine their racial origin" (Wilson, 2003, para. 14). Through oppression, the Spaniards successfully established a network of social relationships. However, a covert Mexican culture evolved "which is not visible and presents difficulties even to the trained observer" (Hall, 1990, p. 61) and is often lost in the interpretation of mainstream teachers. Thus, teachers have interpreted Latino students behavior in whatever way appeals to them (Valenzuela, 1999). Preserving the values of family and believing in a better life are primary characteristics of Mexican culture. Social integration in Mexican family networks can include live-in extended kin and higher family involvement which reinforces cultural development across generations (Gerena et al., 2007).

Spanish rule. Mexican culture was impacted by the Spanish language and social influences between 1540 and 1821 when the Spanish ruled areas of Mexico and the northern frontier, now parts of the United States (California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas). In the Spaniards quest to discover the New World, they effectively exploited

resources and played a key role in both informal and formal educational institutions in Mexico. Hall (1989) concluded that "culture is not only an integrated whole but has its own rules for learning" (p. 131), which the Spanish applied through a new social structure based on the division of the classes (Kanellos, 1993). The social systems of the indigenous inhabitants and the Spanish held conflicting values: "Spaniards fought to kill, Aztecs fought to take prisoners" (Hall, 1990, p. 79). The indigenous people were defenseless; their culture inadequate to resist the Spanish methods of invasion, which was primarily accomplished through killing. Eventually the inhabitants were overpowered and forced into subservience, which resulted in learned behavior passed down through generations as part of the culture of learning for Mexican inhabitants.

Undoubtedly, the Spaniard conquest was a crucial factor in the development of the Mexican language and religion through the forceful indoctrination of the missionary movement that "showed contempt or else disregarded the population's native language and culture" (Kanellos, 1993, p. 289). Overtime, as a result of the oppression, the indigenous people were conditioned to conform to the colonization and to cope with the forces of the Spanish religion, language, and traditions, even though some native traits were retained prior to the formation of the United States and its dominating culture (Kanellos, 1993). Ultimately, the original Mexican culture adopted new traits and became the new configuration of Mexican culture.

Mexican independence. Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821, leaving the country with internal political conflict, overwhelming debt, and few resources to maintain control of the northern frontier, including funding for schooling. (Diaz, 2001). The Mexican people were weakened by centuries of colonization. Thus, to repair and

sustain lives of equality required a lengthy period in which the Mexican people carried out new ways to transform their current state to a better way of life. Because of the state of affairs in Mexico and the Mexican people's lack of skill in political leadership, they were vulnerable to the encroachment of settlers from the United States who wanted to settle in territory belonging to Mexico and, thus, to the development of a new culture enriched by the settlers (Kanellos, 1993). Early history revealed that an influx of immigrants and Anglo Americans who settled in the northern frontier during those turbulent times in Mexico placed little value on the property rights and social welfare of the Mexican people. Despite the injustice that characterized the Mexican people throughout different periods of history and the social capital affected by domineering forces, Mexicans continued to hold strong family values and to value collective community environments (Kanellos, 1993).

Manifest destiny. The less developed schooling and weak political structure in Mexico resulted in an optimal time for Anglo Americans to gain entry. By 1840, the U.S. population had increased to approximately twenty million people ("Immigration into the United States," 1848). As the population increased, Anglos expanded further west into Mexican territory, resulting in the Mexicans being "[f]earful of Anglo-Americans territorial ambitions" (Diaz, 2001, p. 43). Being run out of the northern frontier, Mexicans crossed into the area now established as Mexico (Kanellos, 1993). Texas Mexicans were overpowered by Anglo Americans who forced them off their lands, Anglos ownership exercised throughout Mexican territory and into California. As the occupation of Anglos in Mexican territory increased, the relationship became more strained between Mexico and the United States. The Mexican inhabitants were once

again conditioned through the oppression of another group that conflicted with their system and culture. After "Polk [won the] election in 1844, tensions continued to escalate" (Diaz, 2001, p. 44).

In 1845, the term *manifest destiny* was used in a magazine article reflecting the strong feelings of the current administration (Diaz, 2001; Peterson, 2000). The article, "Annexation," by John O'Sullivan was published in *The United States (U.S.) Democratic Review* in 1845. O'Sullivan, a journalist, was an advocate for the Democratic Party and promoted a belief in liberty and self-government. O'Sullivan's article reflected the values of providence, the right to independence, the right to conquer other territories, and the right to exercise one's patriotic duty to establish moral values of like kind. According to O'Sullivan, the United States had "[n]o obligation of duty towards Mexico tended in the least degree to restrain our right to effect the desired recovery of the fair province one our own … We plead guilty to a degree of sensitive annoyance – for the sake of the honor of our country" (1845, p. 6). Further, Mexico "inherit[ed] from Spain a title good only against those who have none better" (O'Sullivan, 1845, p. 10). Thus, he contends that the suffering of Mexico was no one's fault but that of Mexico alone.

Manifest destiny was an influential concept in President Polk's administration, which helped to build a "new regime harden[ing] into a dominating 'bureaucracy' [in which] the humanist dimension [of Mexican heritage] of the struggle is lost and it is no longer possible to speak of liberation" (Freire, 2004, p. 57). Even with some political resistance, the concept was developed into a doctrine that "legitimized the occupation of the adjacent territorial zones" (Diaz, 2001, p. 45). The general meaning had enough support that Anglo Americans could justify their actions to take lands from the Mexican

people to establish a better civilization in the New World. Although the immediate cause of the war between Mexico and United States might be debated, the movement of power and increasing greed resulted in escalating the conflict between the two countries into war (Kanellos, 1993; Ware, 1914).

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The U.S.'s domination and super power status has been reconstructed from historical documents. Mexican Americans, with their internalized negative self-perceptions derived from centuries of rhetoric from European cultures, sharpened this angst (Godina, 2003). Historically, "Americans believed that they had a divine right to spread their culture and democratic institutions over the North American continent" (Peterson, 2000, p. 20). Within the framework of U.S. institutions, the role of historical assimilation was often emphasized through dominating the culture and identity of ethnic minorities to project the clear message that routes to success must follow the American way (Valenzuela, 1999).

The agreement to end the war was formalized in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in which the boundaries between Mexico and the United States were established. The terms of the treaty were primarily dictated by the power of the United States leading to the U.S. engulfing the northern frontier, almost half of the Mexican territory, and in not honoring the property rights of Mexicans. According to Article IX of the treaty,

> the Mexicans who, in the territories aforesaid, shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican Republic, conformably with what is stipulated in the preceding article, shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States and be admitted, at the proper time (to be judged of by the Congress of the United States)

to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States according to the principles of the Constitution (as cited in Kanellos, 1993, p. 92).

However, during the war, "Mexicans were fearful that Anglo-Americans territorial ambitions would not be satisfied with the gigantic gains ratified in the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. [With the loss,] Mexicans changed their perceptions of themselves and of the United States after the conflict" (Diaz, 2001, p. 47).

Beyond the treaty's assurances, Anglo Americans viewed Mexicans property rights as inferior. This view was reflected in the Land Act of 1851 (California Land Title Association, n.d.; Gates, 1971) in which the Mexicans land claims were ignored or weakened "by the long and costly process [in delays and legal fees that brought on the loss] of maintaining possession to their land" (Chávez, 1998, p. 218). Combined with other "legislation such as the 1850 Foreign Miners Tax Law . . . and the 1855 Vagrancy Act, which sanctioned the arrest and imprisonment of 'idle' Mexicans and levied fines against them payable in cash or temporary service" (Chávez, 1998, p. 218), this act constituted a threat to the citizenship of Mexican inhabitants in American territory.

In spite of the importance of these events, the lynching and murder of Mexican Americans in California and other parts of the Southwest during the late 1800s and the early 1900s were inconsequential in American literature. Vigilantism reflected the law of the land and Anglo American perceptions of moral value (Gonzales-Day, 2006; Kanellos, 1993). Without either voice or value, the Mexicans faced humiliation and a sense of failure under the direction of a new political system and within a culture of entitlements (Diaz, 2001; Kanellos, 1993; O'Sullivan, 1845). Their former oppression had conditioned

Mexicans to adapt under the present domination of the United States, although the cultural invasion was based more on land grabbing than on language and culture.

Immigration limitations. Since California's statehood, Mexicans have been affected by a number of proposed and enacted pieces of legislation, with no end in sight. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was supposed to bring peace and prosperity; however, Mexicans lost their lands and were subject to cultural disestablishment (Kanellos, 1993). By 1917, the United Stated enacted the Immigration Act under which tax and literacy requirements were imposed on immigrants to discourage the flow of illiterate immigrants into the country. However, U.S. farmers were desperate for laborers because of the shortage of labor directly related to the United States entering World War I. Congress reluctantly waived the Immigration Act to allow Mexicans to enter the country to work only as agriculture workers (Kanellos, 1993). The U.S. economy expanded at the same time, resulting in an increasingly diverse workforce of migrant workers. Mexican families increased in greater numbers, establishing new communities and further acculturation into Anglo-American society (Kanellos, 1993).

When the United States entered World War II, a work program was initiated in which "U.S. labor agents actually went to Mexico and recruited thousands of workers . . . [a *bracero* program that contracted Mexicans to work] primarily in agricultural communities and in railroad camps until the program ended 1965" (Kanellos, 1993, p. 40). In spite of this insurgence of Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry into the American home front, prejudice and resistance persisted between the two different cultural societies.

Though democracy forming in the United States moved like wildfire into the Southwest towards protestant capitalism and Anglo American racial ideas (Kanellos, 1993), the domination of racial influences concretely hampered the rhythm of Mexican informal influences in education through the imposition of the values and morals of the U.S. social system (Rodriquez, 1999). The resulting attitudes toward Mexicans became more apparent in education "as political boundaries placed schooling under the [United States] control" (MacDonald, 2001, p. 368). Because of the changes made with the implementation of the American educational system, education was limited to Anglo Saxon beliefs and values. In addition, documents were limited to those in English as the standards for formal education and American history (Faragher, 1998; Kanellos, 1993; Kutler, 2003; Likoff, 2003; MacDonald, 2001).

Except for the historical account of social conflict between Mexico and the United States, historians reflected little on Spanish/Mexican society and emphasized the accounts of Anglo Saxons in America with regard to language, culture, and the economic system. The lack of investigation of the records archived in Spanish resulted in a one-sided understanding of the historical issues centered on Mexican American citizens (González & Fernández, 1994). In addition, the effect of the literature on Mexican heritage and phases of Mexican formal education subtracted from the legitimacy of its content as part of American history (MacDonald, 2001) and within the educational curriculum. Electing to narrow the diversity of value and to present a "segregate[d view of] educational values due to the isolation from one another" (Dewey, 1966, p. 244), resulted in reducing the focus on one-sided social acceptance in the classroom to a focus on mirroring aspects of the social system, lining the framing of pedagogic principles.

Schooling

Latino student experiences from public school classrooms adapting to traditional teaching practices quickly lead to the affects of structural violence. For instance, public education mandates require states to meet the law of "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001" focus exclusively on accountability in student performance (Kutler, 2003). The structural conditions such as the Latino student population are forced to choose between their home culture and their public school culture because the two cultures are incongruent. According to Hall (1990), "culture reflects the way one learns, since culture is 'learned and shared behavior'. . . [that] educators might have a better grasp . . . [if they] stud[ied] the acquired context in which other people learn" (p. 47). Failure to accept and preserve cultural learning in relationship to school size and students experience in their cultural values and the lack of willingness to identify the wrongs in education (Hall, 1989) could result in limiting the future of Latino students education to a cafeteria style characterized by adding or subtracting staff positions that structurally withstand "institutionalized" formal education.

The passage of time resulted in the inclusion in American history of Mexican history with a White view, the focal point being White accomplishments and the standard being the construction by historians of the development of American history (Dario & Bruce, 1998). The assimilation of building on mounds collectivism in the dominant culture apart from other cultures at the expense of drawing away from other literature ends up with not too different a symbol in traditional utopian literature (Galtung, 1978). In which opportunities were missed that "educational historians could [have] fruitfully examine[d] the records of Catholic dioceses, school records after statehood . . . and the

official Mexican government records . . . and type of education available during this era" (MacDonald, 2001) under Spanish and Mexican control. Unfortunately, researchers examining the relationship of Catholicism, language, and culture with regard to schooling during this period ignored the uniqueness in schooling from a missionary model perspective and in regard to the origin of Mexican traditions (Duncan-Andrae, 2005; MacDonald, 2001), undervaluing the culture and beliefs in events of importance in American history. Instead, students were taught the basic skills from U.S. textbooks. These books were focused on the English language and values of U.S. society, including the interpretation in most published books that contain stories about civic virtue and morality that good behavior is rewarded while bad behavior is punished (Perko, 2003), a presumption of social order, a reinforcement of social influences, to seek consistency to action under specific situations (Galtung, 1978).

The profound idea of educating all students under one-sided thinking resulted in a "false generosity . . . [that] interferes with the individual's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human" (Freire, 2004, p. 55). Because of the failure to acknowledge culture, humans were seen "as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (Freire, 2004, p. 84). This limited understanding was reflected in classroom climate that had been shaped primarily by a dominant subgroup. The oppressed must recognize their dependence on the oppressor and engage in self-discovery that begins with a belief in one (Freire, 2004). Multiculturalism, including interest in more than one culture outside of the mainstream culture, continued to be a challenge for the disproportionate culture of the "majority of teacher candidates, teachers, and administrators" (Attinasi, 1994, p. 1). In reality, Latino students were involved with

two different cultures, family and country; but when they walked into the classroom, "the linguistic and cultural resources that bilingual children bring [were] suppressed and at best ignored" (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999, p. 427).

English learners legislation. Most of the English Learner (EL) students (85%) in the state of California speak Spanish and are primarily of Mexican or Mexican American ancestry. The sheer numbers of these students has presented additional costs to the state, acutely affecting appropriate teacher training and staffing to meet Latino students needs ("Comparing California," 2008). In 1968, the federal government enacted the Title VII Bilingual Education Act as a pipeline to help students who spoke languages other than English to learn English within a short period of time (Escamilla, 1989). Failing to deliver a curriculum and processes that reflected the student's informal education, designers based the curriculum fundamentally on the Eurocentric philosophical culture (Escamilla, 1989). As the act evolved, increased demand resulted in more bilingual programs in Spanish. The bilingual programs were structured to emerge Latino students into the dominant culture. The forced language assimilation led students to abandon their native mother language causing dissension in the home and less incentive to feel an equal part of academic learning. The English only requirement, supported by bilingual programs, have changed but not without controversy regarding cost, Latino home culture, and high school dropout rates. English-only programs proclaim to be all-cure to help Latino students meet full high school requirements. Even with this piece of legislation, English was the dominant language in the classroom. Thus, the program became a vehicle to promote U.S. English only ("Hispanic Education," 2003). In 1998, California legislators placed Proposition 227 on the ballot, asking the citizens of the state to vote on

specific legislation to repeal the Bilingual Education Act. In response, voters approved the passage of Proposition 227, rejecting support of bilingual education in public schools ("Hispanic Education," 2003).

After Proposition 227 became law, a short-time method, "which falls back on mechanical routine and repetition to secure external efficiency of habit" (Dewey, 1966, p. 49) was employed with Latino children as part of their education in which they were expected to master the English language. Under Proposition 227, students who spoke little or no English were allowed to submit parent waivers, authorizing their placement in immersion programs (Purcell, 2002). Although sufficient funding and a quality education were not guaranteed, the provisions were placed in Proposition 227 to negotiate places for students with English as their second language (Purcell, 2002). With the waivers, a provision allowing a student into immersion program, Latino students had access to standard public education in which, using this alternative method, any language or culture barrier should have been resolved from a pedagogical perspective. However, the parents waivers, authorizing their a request to place their child into an immersion program, were good for one year during which time the student should be adequately prepared to transition to English-only coursework (Purcell, 2002) but allotted time was not a guarantee the immersion program resolved students transition to English-only coursework to raise their education attainment to grade level.

However, officials in each school district and school had the authority to develop their own processes, if any. This latitude in interpretation of the provisions of Proposition 227 was one of its weaknesses. As a result, it was possible that students with parent waivers could still be placed in classrooms "taught almost in all-English by teachers with

no specialized training in second-language-acquisition theory and methodology" (Purcell, 2002, p. 14). Because the parent waiver was subject to the terms of individual school policies, students could also be sent outside their home schools (Cadiero-Kaplan, & Ochoa, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). Programs could vary significantly from school to school.

California Proposition 227 studies. A research team from the University of California studied the first year of Proposition 227 implementation (Gandara et al., 2000). Their findings indicated districts and schools experienced considerable confusion statewide and used different methods to structure the immersion processes, if any were implemented. Essential guidelines for the content of cultivating students from their native language to English-only academic achievement were unsuccessful. School officials were understandably discouraged in fostering the smooth transition to the dominant language because of the inconsistencies in each program put in place. Because of the accumulation of programs, or the lack thereof, in public schools, "Latino students [have] grow[n] increasingly doubtful . . . losing confidence in their ability to achieve academically" (Akos, Ames, Keeter, & Villalba, 2007, p. 465).

The researchers noted that in policies in response to parent waivers

> school[s] could not guarantee what kind of program would be provided or even if their children would be able to stay in their neighborhood schools. . . . [results of another school district related the policy revealed a] laissez-faire attitude, and allowed individual principals to direct the policy at their schools . . . [And, reported in other locations] some districts and schools did not provide the waivers at all. (Gandara et al., 2000, p.18)

The findings revealed that approximately one third of the school districts selected did not offer the waiver option in order to use the funds on existing programs. Because Proposition 227 lacked direction with regard to parent waivers, a working definition and the language became more imperative in the immersion process than "the instructional needs of the child" (Gandara et al., p. 22). Such working definitions resulted in artificially generating the value of the program. In all, a large number of ELs filled classrooms taught, in many cases, by teachers who lacked teaching accreditation (Gandara et al., 2000) or training in specific ways to prepare Latino students to master two languages, to understand the cultural differences between home and the classroom, and to build relationships between teachers and students in contrast with practices that may affect the academic future of Latino students with diminishing results.

In a more recent report, a 5-year evaluation entitled *Effects of the Implementation of Proposition 227 on the Education of English Learners, K-12*, was submitted to the California Department of Education by the American Institutes for Research (2006). No one model over another was found among successful EL programs. The school principals from high-performing schools with EL programs stressed the following important features:

> ensuring that teachers have knowledge and skills needed to support EL students, . . . deliberately fostering academic language and literacy development across the curriculum . . . [and] strategies to support EL academic achievement such as sustained, on-site technical assistance and professional development. (California Department of Education, 2006, p. IV-1)

In some school districts, success in immersion programs was linked to programs in place prior to Proposition 227. These programs existed in districts where "there was a strong commitment to primary language programs before the initiative passed [that] these programs remain vigorous" (Gandara et al., 2000, p. 14).

Classroom culture. Promoting strategies to increase student hunger for improvement, raising the bar to focus on value added programs, promoting excellence, and ensuring students come first are all components that add value to a school culture (Fullan, 2005). Latino students and EL Latino students, who primarily speak Spanish, outside the mainstream culture have "often experience[d] schooling conditions that inhibit rather than promote their educational success history" (Weisman, Flores, & Valenciana, 2007, p. 193). According to Hall (1990), the two cultures, Latino and Anglo American differed in that in the Anglo American culture, people were more apt to be precise and to deal with a matter whereas in the Latino culture people were more flexible in tending to a matter which messages might be misunderstood and present a problem in communication between the two cultures. For teachers, the problem has been finding "what conditions must be present so that pupils will make the responses which cannot help having learning as their consequence" (Dworkin, 1959, p. 125).

A number of obstacles might arise between a teacher and student, especially because history for Latino children has a different meaning than for Anglo American teachers. In-depth learning of another perspective could result in understanding one's history, but it could be challenged by "tendencies to perceive life as . . . experienced" (Zwiers, 2008, p. 83). Eurocentric traditions of the past, which resulted in "former cultural imperialism which [educators] impose[d] indiscriminately on others" (Hall,

1989, p. 206), could be the basis for preparing students for the American way. U.S. history curricula have been inundated with "Eurocentric places, government systems . . . culture . . . concepts, such as individualism, [and] democracy, . . . [that] might be less emphasized in students home cultures" (Zwiers, 2008, p. 84). The emphasis was unidirectional, resulting in students from diverse backgrounds "feel[ing] uncomfortable expressing [their] opinions during the classroom discussions" (Zwiers, 2008, p. 85). The educational establishment has been reinforced by the thinking of countless scholars and academic writers who published in "the public domain [that] they serve to advance certain [ideologies], stereotypes, paradigms, and sets of assumptions" (Brookfield, 1995, p. 200). This seemingly boundless amount of printed information on values and processes could either be a "hit or miss" as shown in student test scores.

The Hispanic dropout rate is significantly higher than the Anglo American dropout rate. Of the Hispanics who completed high school, 13% received college educations (Provasnik, 2007). Of students bound for college, 23% of Hispanic students enrolled in community colleges compared with 18% of the Anglo Americans and 15% of the African Americans (Penna, 2001). The percentage of Hispanic scholars and academic writers was unclear; however, the contribution of their culture, that of a significant minority group, in the public schools was clearly disproportionate in the collective vision.

Studies on teacher caring and involvement. According to Weisman and Hansen (2008), Latino teachers identified with Latino students based on their own personal experiences in language, assimilation, and the devaluation of their culture. They could raise awareness through material and cultural resources that reflected the mainstream culture. However, in the same study, teachers voiced little concern for "forces that

contribute[d] to inequity, and none voiced the need to challenge traditional views and practices that work to the detriment of Latino students" (Weisman & Hansen, 2008, p. 667), showing Latino characteristics run deep into a type of the one being oppressed (Freire, 2004) as documented in a series of historical events. Marx (2008) reported on a high school in which the faculty was composed of 100% Anglo American teachers and 77% of the students were from Latino ethnicity. The teachers had difficulty relating to the Latino students; and although they admitted their differences in race and ethnicity, "emphasized that race really made no difference in their ability to work with Latina/o students or other students of color" (Marx, 2008, p. 58). The teachers' perceptions and opinions were "completely alien to the existential experience of the students" (Freire, 2004, p. 71). On the other hand, the findings in another study revealed Latino high school students responded positively if teacher caring was genuine, shown through teachers' interests in their students "well-being inside and outside the classroom and always [being] available to the student[s]" (Garza, 2008, p. 316). However, teachers who perceive caring "involves a commitment to predetermined set of ideas—is equivalent to cultural genocide" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 94). By promoting academic achievement outside traditional teaching, teachers could infuse the practice with the need for "a culturally sensitive curriculum . . . [and a sense] that all students feel included" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 100).

Teachers enter into the classroom with the understanding of their role is set out for them to teach students— hrough the way content is taught and explained and through the way rules are enforced and through the way success and failure is measured (Weaver, C., 1991). Teachers who are straightforward, linear type in processing messages may

distort and contribute to a hidden agenda without consciously realizing the processes meet the intended goals for some students to succeed. In processing the messages some students may learn by default rather than learn through what is intended to teach them. This "hidden curriculum" remains hidden in various ways that can complement or neglect the official curriculum (Burton, L. 1998). The status quo of hidden curriculum serving the dominant culture can alienate outside cultures widening the gap rather than narrowing the gap between home culture and public school culture. For instance, student grade results have shown minorities do not perform as well as Anglo Americans and that Mexican Americans also experience slower assimilation into upper socioeconomic statuses (Marques, 2008). The explicit curriculum is set out for teachers to teach and students to learn. An implicit curriculum is crafted within the framework of individual teachers, often not written or published (Burton, L. 1998). In high-context culture messages or communication is either internalized or through physical context with little explicit transmission shown clearly as part of the message (Hall, 1989). Flexibility of implicit curriculum is one approach that includes activities that encourage creative thinking and adapting to student values. On the other side, explicit curriculum is restricted to views that are controlled leaving little lead way to address student needs (Burton, L. 1998). Although, Latino students are best suited towards more implicit curriculum, both ends of the spectra can dictate negative outcomes.

Monzo and Rueda (2003) showed that having Hispanic teachers is good for Hispanic students. In their study, Monzo and Rueda examined whether Hispanic teachers or paraprofessionals were better able to connect with Hispanic students because of their commonality of culture. The researchers studied how Hispanic teachers and

paraprofessionals related to Hispanic students in an American school and found, generally, that

> familiarity with students, their language, cultures and communities and the sociocultural factors that impact their lives both at a group level and at an individual level can be used in important ways to support learning and foster an interest in school. (Monzo & Rueda, 2003, p. 464)

One paraprofessional stood out in her attention to the students and was especially effective. This suggested that teachers of any ethnicity can show caring attitudes if they take the time to know their students.

According to Monzo and Rueda (2003), the key concept of caring was derived from Nel Nodding's conception of "the caring encounter." A caring encounter is characterized by engrossment and receptivity "leading to emotional displacement and action on the cared-for's behalf" (Monzo & Rueda, 2003, p. 441). In engrossment, the teacher "puts aside all other interests and concerns" to listen to the student's concerns (Monzo & Rueda, 2003, p. 441). In receptivity, the teacher feels for the student in a genuine way.

Though noteworthy in caring and other positive attributes, evidence in some high schools indicated that Latino students were far from steadily improving in their educational attainment. In a 2006 study by Ernst-Slavit and Wenger (2006), 20 newly hired bilingual para-educators were employed as part of a teaching program designed specifically to meet the demands of an ever-increasing population of Russian and Latino students, the Latino students constituting the largest minority group. Teachers who predominately "taught from the middle-class, Eurocentric perspectives that shape school

practices" (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006, p. 65) were mentors for the newly hired para-professionals. The principal assigned bilingual para-educators to a number of nonteaching activities (i.e., clerical work, bus duty, lunch monitoring, and translation of textbooks), which reduced the amount of time they were engaged with their assigned students, negating the purpose of the new hires.

In this high school, the principal did not effectively use the para-educators to promote culturally sensitive instruction in ways to expand "a 'strong' organizational culture that holds high expectations for performance . . . academic learning, [that, if effective leadership were practiced, would] set the tone of the school" (Lavie, 2006, p. 781) based on a shared vision to increase academic achievement for all students. Instead, the 20 para-educators were placed in administrative tasks rather than allowing them to teach students the necessary skills to achieve educational goals. Thus, the implications of overlooking the value of Latino student contributions continued to sustain a dominant elite of "banking concepts to encourage passivity in the oppressed" (Freire, 2004, p. 95), meaning filling their minds with encouragement of passivity, consciously "characterized [by an] indifference toward instructional quality" (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009, p. 24) and alignment with similar cultural dimensions.

Paulo Freire's (2004) banking concept reveals the narrative relationship between teachers and students. Freire discussed how teaching styles have been narrated from static and predictable processes. Teachers tend to lead students to memorize and repeat phrases that give way to past lifeless curriculum. This method of learning teaches students permitted information, and the more a student learns of this permitted information the better they perform. This form of education "becomes an act of depositing, in which the

students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (p.72). In this "banking" concept the knowledge goes as far as the knowledge has been bestowed upon the student. The more students store the "deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop critical consciousness" (p.73) the more they entrust to accept passive role and adapt to the conditions as a view of reality.

Frieire (2004) stated teachers who use the banking approach, with or without knowledge of the concept, "fail to perceive that the deposits themselves contain contradictions about reality" (p.75). A large-scale survey across 12 school districts in 4 states of "approximately 1,300 administrators, 15,000 active teachers, and 790 former teachers" (Weisberg et al., 2009, p. 37) was conducted to obtain faculty and staff experiences and perspectives in reference to teacher evaluation systems. Teachers, new and tenured, had high opinions of their own teaching skills, but their perspective was not supported by the views of students. The researchers concluded that new and tenured teachers believed "they deserve the highest performance ratings and are dissatisfied if they are rated good, not great" (Weisberg et al., 2009, p. 22). In addition, novice teachers' self-assessment evaluations revealed that 69% rated themselves at 8 or higher on instructional performance. Length of service was not part of the teacher evaluation system in terms of teaching effectiveness. The survey responses also revealed "49 percent of teachers and only 44 percent of administrators agree or strongly agree that their district enforces a high standard of instructional performance for all teachers" (Weisberg et al., 2009, p. 25). Fundamentally, teachers' opinions of themselves had no bearing on student needs or consequences of student educational futures.

The banking concept takes into consideration some version of reality but conceals certain facts that plainly contradict the cultural ways that fail to acknowledge the importance of historical beings (Freire, 2004). In *Subtractive Schooling*, Valenzuela (1999) wrote about an ethnographic study of U.S. Mexican youth in one high school located in Texas conducted to investigate the meaning of caring. The researcher indicated "predominantly non-Latino teaching staff sees students as not sufficiently *caring* about school . . . [Latino students have similar feelings. They see] the teachers as not sufficiently *caring* for them" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 61). Teacher's behavior suggested that students should exhibit caring as an "abstract or aesthetic" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 61) behavior that advances to academic achievement. Because of this mismatch in communication, it was more difficult for teachers to describe the "abstract and complex concepts . . . [taught in the classroom.] . . . The input that students receive [could] often be incomprehensible, due to the newness of the concept, the language, or both" (Zwiers, J, 2008, p. 42). When the students received words from the teachers that showed little caring, the teachers implied that Latino students did not have a future (Valenzuela, 1999; Zwiers, 2008) and that the students were not in a position to question. According to Valenzuela (1999),

> teachers sometimes make this view explicit . . . [through] abrasive and overbearing behavior . . . [the words spoken by a teacher in the classroom convey the meaning ']look at them, they're not going anywhere. I can tell you right now, a full quarter of these [Latino] students will drop out of school. (p. 65)

Such teacher verbal abuse continued when the students were quiet. Under these circumstances students were oppressed, another form of self-depreciation,

> which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them. . . . They hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything . . . at the end they become convinced of their own unfitness. (Freire, 2004, p. 63)

In presence of "curriculum on development of strong bilingual skills to ensure [literacy] in both English and Spanish, instructional policies and practices such as; personalization of the academic experience, … and assist parents so that both schools and families can unite around strategies (social, economic, and educational) [sets practices equal footing for Latino students] to complete high school and move on to post-secondary training, education, or employment" (Lockwood, 1996, p. 3).

Continuous improvement in programs instead of traditional educational inequity that "thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped" (Freire, 2004, p.45) was reflected with a reality in the *Time* magazine article on American public schools (Ripley, 2010). One 19-year-old woman, Ms. Rojas, sat down in a stadium watched a documentary on the American public education system. Watching the footage Ms. Rojas remembered when she was told by her fifth-grade teacher, ethnicity unknown, "It does not matter if you learn. Your future is determined" (p. 34). These words affected Ms. Rojas who thought the teacher was correct. By the 10th grade, Ms. Rojas had dropped out of high school. In watching this documentary, Ms. Rojas recognized what she experienced in public schools was part of a bigger problem in the American educational system. Although the public school system failed Mr. Rojas, she had managed to get her GED and was enrolled in a community college.

Classroom instruction. Valenzuela (1999) concluded "caring pedagogy considers the strengths that youth brings with them to school alongside [past school experiences and behavior issues] that [may] disrupt what would otherwise be a more natural development of those strengths" (p. 115). Although the teacher's role is to teach, without knowledge of how students experience learning and the energy to be more involved in student development, teaching could result in few rewards (Brookfield, 1995; Zwiers, 2008). If the objective in student learning is teaching the student to memorize facts and figures through the dominant culture rather than keeping in mind the informal education of the other culture, then the end could reflect success through competitive results. However, this systematic method could result in lessening the value of alternative learning and potentially overlooking the "steadily increasing isolation" (Orfield, 2001, p. 43) in classrooms from which Latino students are suffering.

Teacher and student relationships are challenging enough without differences in cultural backgrounds. Adults and children (teachers and students) from different cultural backgrounds use a form of communication that may be complicated to understand. They may be at odds with each other because "whenever a message produced in one culture must be processed in another culture . . . languages and nonverbal differences may make communication difficult" (Lulofs & Cahn, 2000, p. 40). Differences beyond communication, including dress, artifacts, and values and assumptions, must also be learned and respected in teacher–student interactions (Nind, Benjamin, Sheehy, Collins, & Hall, 2004). All of these apparent deficits in cultural and social capital have culminated in the classroom, where mismatches often exist between the teacher's style, dictated by the institution, and the learning style the student brings into the classroom (Cruz &

Walker, 2001). Often teachers are involved in teaching rather than in assessing whether "their values might reflect prejudices or even racism towards certain groups. When teachers [view and admit] . . . such biases, they help to create an atmosphere of trust and acceptance for students" (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006, p. 5). Therefore, teachers must understand these values, and this understanding does not mean hosting a Cinco de Mayo party as an example of authentic culturally responsive teaching. Leadership in educating all backgrounds has often been challenging, but the lack of attention to Latino students has had far more reaching consequences in the cultural and social capital of U.S. society.

In culturally responsive teaching, concerns for the student are expressed. Gay (2002) explained that one approach "to establish cultural congruity in teaching is integrating ethnic and cultural diversity into most . . . instructional process on a habitual basis" (p.113). This movement is an open-ended educational process that begins with "knowing the cultures and experiences of different ethnic groups, . . . and learning how to apply multicultural examples in teaching other knowledge and skills" (Gay, 2002, p. 113) so that communication matures and equality in educational achievement exists (Attinasi, 1994). In promoting ethnic and cultural equality, teachers must exhibit cultural sensitivity in the "understanding of and accommodation for diverse cultures" (Tan, 2002, p. 23) so that Latino students attach and feel connected with their teachers.

As the Latino student population increases, the need for culturally sensitive programs has also grown. However, full awareness must include more than an add-on (Sanchez, 1995). Teacher programs or training for diverse learners should integrate "issues of awareness of biases and stereotypes, and the selection of appropriate testing. . .

These measures [possibly enhance] more relevant and culturally sensitive assessments" (Sanchez, 1995, p. 3). The terms *multicultural* and *diversity* "impl[y] an approach or system that takes more than culture into account" (Northouse, 2007, p. 302).

Over the years, in assimilating Latino students in public schools, school officials in the United States have enforced the speaking of English only, devalued Mexican history in the school curriculum, and treated the Mexican cultural heritage as an insignificant part of Mexican students cultural identity ("Hispanic Education," 2003). The underlying conditioning of the criterion of one language, of the dominant group, resulted in the centering of their "own beliefs, attitudes and values, over and above those of other groups . . . [creating an] obstacle to effective leadership" (Northouse, 2007, p. 303) and to the understanding and respecting of others cultures. According to Aroe and Nelson (2000), "the number of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the United States is increasing dramatically and is expected to continue" (p. 314). However, the dominant system at large has resulted in the failure of certain groups, including Latino students, to attain appropriate academic achievement. The ideology of formal education in the United States has been used to filter out differences resulting in conflict for some Latino students attempting to achieve their high school diplomas. Historically, the dominant culture in American society has "trie[d] to find a way to educate, train, or prepare individuals from one culture to work in another" (Avruch, 2000, p. 59), presuming the style of the dominant culture used to deliver education should also be successful in other cultures. Reducing the Mexican heritage to a subservient role has resulted in the fragile state of the culture in which "teachers fail to forge meaningful

connections with their students [and] students are alienated from their teachers" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 5).

Funds of Knowledge

A strong area of research supportive of culturally responsive pedagogy has been the "funds of knowledge" approach. In this approach to developing the skills of diverse students, educators try to bridge the division between home and school culture by viewing the home culture not as a deficit to be overcome (as is too often the case even in the social capital perspective of critical theory) but as a fund of knowledge to be built upon (Casanova, 2003, p. 15). The primary way to implement funds of knowledge has been for the teacher to acknowledge the value of the home culture of the student and to allow the student to bring elements of that culture into the classroom context: "Instead of treating students home cultures, native languages and ways of thinking and communicating as obstacles to learning or problems to be solved, teachers should capitalize on students home culture while explicitly teaching the mainstream culture" (Casanova, 2003, p. 16). In one funds of knowledge study, this was possible because the teachers did some research in the homes of their students, discovering many positive elements with which they could work. The researchers in this study reported "the knowledge gained by the teachers through this research strengthened the teachers identification with their students" (Casanova, 2003, p. 16).

The funds of knowledge approach is focused on modes of communication; the "possibility of creating the collective contexts that facilitate the transmission of knowledge, skills and resources" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 108). Studies have shown that "congruent communication between students and teachers [is] critical to the success of

urban teachers in responding to student cultural and ethnic needs" (Brown, 2003, p. 281). Studies have also shown that "differences in communication style can affect the quality of the relationship between teacher and African American, Hispanic and Native American students" (Brown, 2003, p. 281). With the funds of knowledge approach, Latino high school students worked around their home culture in the classroom and conceded to the classroom culture. This resulted in molding success meaning advancement even though "students distance[d] themselves from their original cultural identification" (Altschuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 6). The effects of working around the culture were that students suppressed their feelings, which "tend[ed] to interfere with effective functioning" (Hall, 1990, p. 75) associated with patterns related to schooling.

Anglo American domination has continued in its vague characterization of the historical value of Mexican Americans and their culture in American history (González & Fernández, 1994) subsequently reflected in perceptions in existing classrooms. For example, according to Garcia (2007), Graglia, a Texas law professor and a critic of affirmative action,

> told students in [his] class: 'Blacks and Mexican-Americans are not academically competitive with whites in selective institutions. It is the result primarily of cultural effects. They have a culture that seems not to encourage achievement. Failure is not looked upon with disgrace' [after series of complaints Mr. Graglia] issued a written statement saying, 'While I stand by my opposition to racial preferences, which necessarily implies differences in academic competitiveness, I fully support the university and law school efforts and wish to do what I can to assist them.' (para. 13)

Based on social learning theory, enculturation begins with the family and spreads outward to inculcate values, skills, and beliefs in a child (Olmedo, 2003; Romero, Cuellar, & Roberts, 2000). Latino culture is thoroughly imbued with *familismo*: One is always relating to others, thinking of others, and acknowledging one's interdependence on others. Things are not said on how one feels but shown in other ways (Altschuler & Schmautz, 2005). This mismatch of communication, Latino students must negotiate culture, language, and self-identity.

Faced with a critical theory discourse in which acculturation is seen as a negative process routinely rejected by minority and immigrant students, researchers have called for a reexamination of the intricacies of acculturation to find a pathway for Latino students to navigate (Romero, A.J., Cuellar, I., & Roberts, R.E., 2000). While White middle-class children move seamlessly through a system constructed on cultural assumptions that school systems share with their families, minority and immigrant students must struggle with an institutional culture that is foreign to them, not knowing how things work and having little social capital. Studies conducted from this orientation have shown that minority and immigrant groups face significant cultural obstacles at school and that the mere fact of having to confront and deal with this kind of deficit positioning has "a significant influence in determining the success or failure of these students" (Jordan, 1997, p. 1).

Enculturation

Enculturation, in a broad sense, is "the normative socialization into culture that children of all cultures experience" (Romero et al., 2000, p. 79). Ogbu's (as interpreted by Ream, 2001) relevance as related to the process of enculturation of minority or

immigrant students into mainstream schools lays in his distinction between voluntary and involuntary immigration, with the latter resulting in a mindset resistant to becoming assimilated to the mainstream practice. Ogbu also discerned that "in the aftermath of contact between mainstream and non-mainstream groups" (as quoted in Ream, 2001, p. 34) minorities could respond to the very process of enculturation differently. This was the reason, he argued, so many African Americans continued to view the idea of acculturating themselves to the mandates of the mainstream educational system as selling out to the system. Most notably, Ogbu observed that many African American students believed that doing good in school constituted "acting White" (as quoted in Ream, 2001, p. 34), implying that an African American student did good in school only because he assimilated. Although some may argue that Latinos represent a voluntary immigrant group and thus should not exhibit an oppositional stance to mainstream education, alienation among Latinos has apparently reached a point where, perhaps informed by modeling from African American youth, they also term doing well in school as "doing the Anglo thing" (Altschuler & Schmautz, 2005, p. 5). Further, Latino students often showed "academic reluctance" not from lack of academic ability but "from their resentment and distrust of the dominant culture" (Altschuler & Schmautz, p. 5).

By measuring the acculturation levels of a student's parents, researchers tried to "measure parent attitudes toward socializing their children into U.S. American culture and/or Latino culture" (Romero et al., 2000, p. 80). Based on these results, the experiences of the students were measured. Researchers found that some students, because of strengths in enculturation, experienced acculturation more positively or differently. Some individual students gradually became "bicultural" and, in that state,

identified themselves with both Hispanic and American cultures in ways that were "independent of each other" (Romero et al., 2000, p. 81). Other results showed that parents who had a high Latino identity and low American identity "were more likely to endorse Latino socialization of their children" (Romero et al., 2000, p. 87) and vice versa.

Yet, acculturation might be related to social difficulties for some Latino children, but "predicting academic outcomes [were] less understood" (Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004, p. 133). Patterns could only be identified and trusted if the source was known to be accurate. As Schwartz stated, "culture consists of the derivatives of experience" (as quoted in Avruch, 2000, p. 17) through learned meanings from previous generations and through programmed positive or negative interpretations formed by individuals themselves.

However, whether voluntary or involuntary, in traditional schooling, Latino students have seen a strong public school system oriented to "rapidly [acquired] cultural assimilation" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 89), negating student cultural value from important social contributions driven by a climate in the education setting that is seen as oppressive and alienating. As Latino students become more acculturated to the U.S. mainstream, Latino attitudes toward indigenous cultural issues have become less supportive (Branton, 2007); and the Latino student population has been subjected to more ready-made curriculum.

Assimilation

Historically, societies left "cultural deposits" of Eurocentric values emerged into education institutions "represent[ing] the division and separations which obtain[ed] in social life" (Dewey, 1966, p. 247). The educational system of the public schools is made

up of patterns and role expectations "governing the definition of rights in possessions and obligations relative to them" (Parsons, 1964, p. 39). As history repeats itself, public school policies and practices are embedded with the dominant culture at large. As well as, a similar loop of Latino student is being challenged to changing Latinos perception of cultural identity for the sake of obedience in public education. In institutional system, an undercurrent of structural violence can run in ways to hinder people from achieving their full potential. Meaning, the direct structural violence legitimized the interest of the public school as the "integration of a set of common value patterns with the internalized need-disposition structure of the constituent personalities [encompassing] the core phenomenon of the dynamics of the social systems" (Parsons, 1964, p. 42). The structural violence concept by Galtung (1978) is taken from a broader view in nonviolent methods in ways the social structure hinders people from meeting their basic needs. Galtung (1978) explains structural violence perpetrates into building an infrastructure of unevenly distributed power less visible of strategies that equip human needs with the intended outcomes. In the social structure at large, structural violence occurs through the unequal distribution of power and systematically imbeds a type of silent violence that is not instantly recognizable but plays an important role in assessing conflict and understanding the problem to potentially transcend the right to educational equity. In today's American public education system, it is evident that the system has indoctrinated educational inequity into tightly woven fabric of American education. In that system, the pressing need to address structural conditions that are actively impeding Latino students' growth is ignored. These conditions in limited funds and resources, teacher skills, lack of

enrichment programs, and high school culture are a few factors that achievement among Latino students (Garcia-Reid, 2008).

In ideal circumstances, cultural patterns are internalized and the internalization of institutionalized values evolves into values that "become harnessed to the fulfillment of role-expectations . . . [to the highest degree] that it is possible to say that a social system is highly integrated . . . of the collectively and the private interests" (Parsons, 1964, p. 42). However, in reality, to break the cycle of structural violence in formal education in areas that threaten education equality, researchers must consider the underlying "unequal exchange" in particularly, where it leaves a mark in mind and spirit negatively on outcomes of student academic performance. Yet some with a different view of prominent voices could slow the process. Chavez (1991), a former U.S. Congresswoman, believed it was the responsibility of the family to teach children their mother language and culture. Further, it was not the responsibility of the government to provide teaching material for culture and history: "The best way for Hispanics to learn about their native culture is in their own communities" (Chavez, 1991, p. 164).

Chavez (1992) argued that, although it is critically necessary to have a consensus on the benefits of assimilation for the growing number of Latino immigrants because the system is unable to absorb these masses without consequences, children should not be required to understand the curriculum if they do not understand the language. The problem, blamed on a language barrier, suggested assimilation is necessary, meaning Latinos should "make some adjustments if they are to accomplish what other ethnic groups have" (Chavez, 1992, pp. 162–163). If educators were to place value on cultural contexts, into practice, major changes in the classroom might inspire Latino students.

Such adjustments might work if positive reinforcement was shown in caring and in meeting "physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs" (Monzo & Rueda, 2003, p. 441), especially with Latino students. As noted from other studies, social scaffolding "must also involve providing the necessary affective supports" to result in students learning better (Monzo & Rueda, 2003. p. 465). In this framework, teachers could assist students through "questioning, modeling, feedback, contingency management, cognitive structuring, task structuring, and instructing" (Monzo & Rueda, 2003, p. 439). This approach was also effective when teachers had some knowledge of what the student already knew and took the time to understand their backgrounds better.

Latinos who retained strong attachments to their native traditions tended to experience difficulty assimilating in the United States. Likewise, "more acculturated Latinos exhibit[ed] more risk behaviors" (Carvajal, Hanson, Romero, & Coyle, 2002, p. 182) that were harmful to self or others. While seemingly contradictory, these findings suggested that mono-cultural orientation either way results in problems for Latino students undergoing enculturation; adopting a bicultural stance was probably the best idea (Carvajal et al., 2002). Moreover, as more detailed enculturation studies revealed that "culture can be created and changed" in people (Medina & Luna, 2004, p. 15), some researchers focused on biculturalism as a means of empowering Latino students in American education because of the success of a bicultural standing. Because of their attachment to their group's culture, students might find it difficult to adjust or modify to their surroundings. When individual students "navigate[d] successfully in their new host culture without weakening ties with their culture of origin by preserving its language, rituals, and family history" (Diversi & Mecham, 2006, p. 41), they performed better.

However, one must understand that acting upon the dominant culture "will not lead to a transformation of objective reality" (Freire, 2004, p. 52).

In other words, the weaker culture is attempting to socialize with the society at large. This alienation or departure of their culture can be defined in two aspects: "to be [departed] away from own culture and to be re[-]socialized into another culture – like the prohibition and imposition of languages. But they [weaker culture] often come together in the category of second class citizenship" (Galtung, 1990, p. 293). Acting consistently in meeting expectations does not necessarily indicate stability. Even though assimilation takes hold and the subjected group is forced to adjust by society at large, this kind of brainwashing for children gives them no choice in voice or offering in cultural idiom (Galtung, 1990). As such, Latino students have been destined to fail in terms of academic expectations until the needs of this minority population have been recognized within the dominant culture.

High-Context and Low-Context Cultures

In general, high-context cultures tend to add links of relationship cautiously to a chain of commitment. High-context communicators use many nonverbal cues, including body language and gestures, to communicate messages, depending on their proximity to the other person (Hall, 1989). Moreover, high-context communicators often do not communicate in ways that are consistent with their feelings, as those in low-context cultures do. Rather, they express themselves in circular ways before the subject becomes known (Augsburger, 1992; Avruch, 2000; Wurtz, 2005).

Shared traits, along with other characteristics, are the basis of group identity and culture, including patterns of symbols, feelings, and communication distinctly ascribed to

human groups (Avruch, 1998; Rushing, 2001). In the Latino culture, these traits include a language that is verbal and nonverbal, inclusiveness of Mexican heritage, strong family ties, a collective orientation to community life, and a preference to talk around the issue and to be more at ease in informal environments (Espinosa, 1995). These traits are operational in high-context cultures (Hall, 1989; Wurtz, 2005). High-context communication is more emotional and involves close relationships rather than being rational and linear (Salleh, 2005). Because high-context communication occurs in the context of relationships, a great deal of indirectness exists within the communication. In high-context situations, interlocutors say things indirectly but expect the listeners to understand. The "speakers provide part of the message and leave the remaining pieces to be filled in by the listener" (Salleh, 2005, p. 4).

Low-context communication is more direct and individualistic; there is no sense of obligation or duty to complete actions if something better serves the individual's needs. Low-context communicators deal with word games and "seem to resist self-examination" (Hall, 1989, p. 154). Low-context culture is the reverse of high-context culture in terms of style of flexibility. It is individualistic instead of collectivistic and task-oriented to meet deadlines rapidly in place of stability (Avruch, 2000; Hall, 1989). Although Europeans face a different social culture, their social characteristics are more similar to low-context culture traits (Avruch, 1998). Because of the color of their skin, they adapt more easily to the physical environment within the social system of the United States (Perdue, 1986; Wilson, 2003).

Latino student culture is more reflective of high-context cultures. However, for some Latino students, the low-context culture is reflective of behavior patterns that are a

hybrid between high- and low-context cultures. This has resulted in "confus[ing] what they [the public school system] call [formal] education with learning" (Hall, 1989, p. 35). The Latino culture is learned through life experiences in an informal way; it is not the result of planned instruction, just as learning a second language normally occurs within a casual environment, not from a set of instructions (Illich, 1972).

Often, high-context communicators, unlike the expectation in low-context cultures, do not communicate in ways that are consistent with their feelings. During conflicts, high-context communicators use "indirect, nonconfrontational, and vague language, relying on the listener's or reader's ability to grasp the meaning from the context" (Wurtz, 2005, p. 1). However, even with a strong culture and internal safeguards to maintain civility, the cultural organism responds to education; thus, "people can be trained to perform in ways that bypass the natural and analytical capabilities of the brain" (Hall, 1989, p. 202).

To understand the cultural aspects of the problems experienced by Latino students, more researchers have begun utilizing Hall's classic differentiation of cultures into low- and high-context modes. With this approach, researchers have been able to analyze the covert level where culture works almost unconsciously and student behavior is so easily misunderstood (Altschuler & Schmautz, 2005; Huang, 1997; Lindquist, Knieling, & Kaufman-Scarborough, 2001; Platt, 2005; Salleh, 2005; Tomoeda & Bayles, 2002; Wurtz, 2005). However, because interactions between teachers and Latino students involve such a complex number of variables, both psychological and sociological, some contributing variables could be overlooked.

Once Hall established the validity of this construct, he and others began to see that the low/high-context divide paralleled other cultural constructs. Far from being an absolute, time is "culturally variable and programmed" (Platt, 2005, p. 1). Low-context time is being on time to the minute and progressing through allotted time to a conclusion; high-context time is polychromic, that is, "event-oriented" (Tomoeda & Bayles, 2002, p. 1) meaning that however long it takes to complete an event is how long it must take before beginning another thing. Low-context culture persons insist on punctuality; high-context persons arrive when they are done with what they have been doing and at any given point where it still remains possible to get something done (Tomoeda & Bayles, 2002). Monochronic time people plan and schedule "to promote efficiency" (Wurtz, 2005, p. 1); polychromic time people "believe that everything will happen 'when it's time'" (Wurtz, 2005, p. 1). In 1988, Treismann (as cited in Ibarra, 2005) used Hall's construct of low/high-context cultures and found that some academic subjects are low context, including calculus, and thus present serious learning difficulties to high-context learners. Such low-context subjects could be taught more effectively to students from high-context cultures when students were placed in groups, a high-context characteristic.

Researchers in several studies have undertaken a micro-level analysis of the problems teachers and students encounter as high-context culture students come into low-context mainstream education. They found that to succeed "male minority students and all women often find it necessary to alter or over-ride important personal values" (Ibarra, 2005, p. 5). Students, who were not able to override cultural orientations to high-context learning, having pursued low-context subjects, were more likely to change majors or fields of study (Ibarra, 2005). To forestall this problem, the primary recommendation in

the literature concerning low- and high-context cultures in the classroom is that low-context classrooms should be transformed into high-context learning environments (Ibarra, 2005, p. 5). Researchers also found that "Latino undergraduates who recreated family-like relationships and infrastructures on campus, such as extended kin networks and other support groups were less likely to drop out" (Ibarra, 2005, p. 5).

In other programs where a high incidence of Latino student success was noted, researchers found that the institutions had undertaken the task of "creating infrastructures that emulated the extended family/community cultural systems of Hispanic culture" (Ibarra, 2005, p. 5). In creating, for example, group residencies, a high-context environment was made. Although at the high school level teachers were limited to classroom recreation of high-context situations,

> it appear[ed] that each of these personal and institutional activities [were] successful because they recreate[d] important macro level characteristics found in high context cultures, and they adopt[ed] them to the priority needs for specific ethnic populations on the micro level. (Ibarra, 2005, p. 5)

In general, the American educational system has been "assumed to be the best in the world and equally applicable to all peoples and must therefore be imposed upon . . . [everyone] without regard to their own culture" (Hall, 1989, p. 210). Just as misunderstandings by teachers of high-context cultural behavior could be erased if the teachers come to a level of awareness of the cultural values of these behaviors, so too such gaps in perception and understanding could be chased from classrooms if the classrooms and the teachers pedagogy were transformed from low context to high context (Abramovitz, Deacon, Woods, & Tolin, 2001; Kitayama & Ishii, 2002; Smith, 1980;

Stuber, 2005; Wurtz, 2005). One who appreciates and "will not assume that all minds work in the same way because they happen to have the same teacher and textbook" (Dewey, 1966, p. 130) reveals a sense of awareness in considering student needs. High-context and low-context balance come with challenges, teachers may find student experiences with regard to their culture, may carry more of their own culture, that the internalization of the patterns of learning may go unnoticed.

The use of the low-context/high-context construct could be a valuable tool in helping Latino high school students performs more effectively in school (Altschuler & Schmautz, 2005; Casanova, 2003; Chiang, Hunter, & Yeh, 2004; Cruz & Walker, 2001; Ibarra, 2005; Stanton, 2000). Zwiers (2008) argued that in "seeking to care for and validate students home language and culture, [a teacher] accepts most of their oral and written language without any corrective feedback. . . . this can be a form of [misleading the student] of the necessary skills and language" (p. 52) learned in the academic setting.

Despite the characteristic differences between high- and low-context cultures and the relationship, structural violence is a process that variably impacts both context cultures. As structural violence impacts the social structure, cultural violence impacts marginalization and fragmentation. According to Galtung (1990) cultural violence is the construct of attitudes and beliefs learned through family, community, and the surrounding environment faced in daily life. For instance, stories of history about the necessity of power and propaganda of victories taught since childhood perpetuate cultural violence. In time, the basic underlying difference runs as a more permanent condition as a steady flow until the deprive losses become conscious visible into playing out into direct violence. If

stressed enough the nonviolent structures can surface to direct violence, such as; crime, poor grades, and acting out in other forms to get revenge.

Cultural Context

According to psychological anthropology, two overall levels of culture exist. The overt culture consists of what is commonly known as culture; the "clearly identifiable cultural components such as religion, formal language, and the values and norms explicated in philosophy or folklore" (Huang, 1997, p. 2). As psychological anthropologists studied culture, they determined that there was also a covert or hidden culture, "defined by the unconscious behavioral and perceptual patterns resulting from daily social learning" (Huang, 1997, p. 2). Covert culture is "much more subtle, but regulates one's daily life unconsciously" (Huang, 1997, p. 4). The covert culture outlined by Hall consists of how one walks and talks in a culture, "how to move one's body and make facial expressions, and . . . how to think and feel" (Huang, 1997, p. 4). This level of culture is "so deeply ingrained in humans that they are rarely aware of these processes" (Huang, 1997, p. 4).

The term for the field that has been developed on the basis of the observations of psychological anthropology about covert culture is intercultural communications, first used by Hall in *The Silent Language* (1990). Hall was hired by the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. State Department to assist diplomats in communicating more effectively overseas. Following Hall, others, including Birdwhistell, studied other types of nonverbal communication. Hall emphasized in *Beyond Culture* (1989) a "nonverbal, unstated realm of culture" (p. 16), including proxemics (how different cultures use space

during communication), chromenics (how different cultures view time), and kinesics (how language is supported by gestures and body language) (Rogers et. al., 2001).

Culture is a collection of similar characteristics that bind a group of individuals together. The beliefs are recycled into cognitive and behavioral cultural contexts (Avruch, 2000) creating an invisible framework of rules and social messages that surround individuals in overlapping circles, often outside their conscious awareness (LeBaron, 2003). Informal education is learned through life experiences and in social settings in which, through daily activities, one acquires values and interests and gains knowledge from family, school, religion, community, and propaganda. The dialogue of conversation, the transference of thinking into meaning, results in a framework of characteristics found in respect, trust, hope, and understanding (Hall, 1989). These characteristics were mirrored in a study of Latino mothers challenged in understanding their children's formal education influences conflicted with home cultural values. Such as; the Latino mothers questioned values taught in the school such as the child challenging parental authority and other cultural norms "valued so highly by the mothers . . . that some were even willing to challenge authorities" (Olmedo, 2003, p. 386). The characteristics of value and respect were assumed by the mother, a misunderstanding that could result in a potential conflict in the relationship of school and parent. Similarly, students could feel pressured by conflicting authority patterns at home and at school.

Cultures may predominantly be focused on the collective or the individual. Persons from collectivist cultures have been shown to perform better when working within group settings, shared participation and when performing interdependent tasks. In contrast, persons from individualist cultures have been found to be focused on self-

fulfillment, viewing time "as an adversary in the sense that group interactions are a temporary means" (Stanton, 2000, p. 2). However, the numerous studies cited in the available literature, there is little clarity concerning how characteristics learned through informal education align with the skills acquired in formal education (MacLeod, 1995).

Cultural Capital

French socialist Pierre Boudieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital existed in three forms; embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. The embodied state is the most difficult form in which to develop a tangible link between accumulation of human value and economic investment. This form is the least visible to be quantified from the viewpoint of economic wealth as an integral part of measurable value. Boudieu argued, (1986) that the embodied state exists by individual cultural experiences as their inherit set of values, belief, and so forth that influence their life in society. This inexact measurement viewed from individuality combined with acquired inherited traits, and social conditions transmitted into society disguised in various forms, "economic capital is not fully recognized … which scarce cultural capital [into] class-divided societ[y]" (Boudieu, 1986, p. 244). In other words, social structures sanctioned by "hidden form of hereditary transmission of cultural capital … [families with stronger cultural capital receive] proportionately greater weight in the system of reproduction strategies" (p. 244). Cultural capital in the objectified and institutionalized form defined by measurable value in material objects and performance recognized by profit and results make it possible to be given a direct link to monetary value. With this said, Boudieu (1986) asserts that inherited family investment plays a vital role in a student's academic achievement in a way that yield results that combine family investment and social conditions. From this

viewpoint, a student who has been more socialized with the dominant culture may appear to teachers as more gifted and interested in learning which significantly affect student academic achievement. Depending on the range of differing influences and treatment of differences by the social structure in relationship to the educational system and how society aligns with the families social structure, the student's circumstances may be applied to an explanation of their scholastic level of academic achievement. Consequently, the reproduction of the dominant culture creates a greater ability to instill their belief and practices into the framing of the educational curriculum that permits teachers to eject similar linguistic and cultural practices, students that share similar history may reap greater rewards of inherited family investment. In other words, public schools are armed in academic programs on mechanisms by which structural violence occurs that are less visible in the processes that disengage or undermine Latino students to breed similar outcomes as previous generations (Galtung, 1990; Garcia-Reid, 2008).

In terms of cultural context focused on the connection between teachers and students, sociocultural theory has been more amenable to students from collectivist cultures (Kozulin, Gindis, Egeyev, & Miller, 2003). In most urban classrooms, students complained that most teachers "are formal and display a narrow focus on instructional task[s]" (Monzo & Rueda, 2003, p. 442). When teachers developed lower expectations with minority students or stumbled into "misunderstandings based on discontinuities between the school and the home" (Monzo & Rueda, p. 442), the situation worsened. Smaller schools resulted in smaller communities and feelings of connectedness. Students had a sense of security and opportunities to encounter feelings of caring from school

staffs. However, specialized programs and more resources were more readily available in larger schools (Gottfredson & DiPietro, 2011; Kahne, Sporte, Torre, & Easton, 2008).

The label Latino is a generalization of a very disparate group of students. Teachers of Latino students must not only adjust their pedagogy to this overarching group but must also acknowledge that there are groups within groups and individuals as well (Casanova, 2003). They must also determine the nature of the experience of acculturation for a particular Latino group. Mexican American students, for example, may not notice any the offensive references to their indigenous cultures (Casanova, 2003) in normative discourse derived from hundreds of years of oppression. By creating communities of learning in classrooms, teachers could make classrooms more appealing to students from collective, high-context cultures.

Cultural capital "embodies the norms, social practices, ideologies, languages and behavior that are part of a given context" (Howard, 2003, p. 198). Students who have grown up in an educational system premised on the middle class and who have excelled within it have done well in school because they have internalized the rules and expectations. In the public school system as a whole, generally, the power structure of the elite has been reproduced. Most aspects of the existing social system, including the pedagogic principles, have been rooted in social class systems that "require familiarization with the dominant culture and all its beliefs, behaviors and ideals" in order for one to succeed (Howard, 2003, p. 198).

Coleman (as cited in Ream, 2001) discussed human capital theory as a variant on cultural capital theory in which human capital for children in school consists of elements of the household, socioeconomic background, and even parental education levels.

According to human capital theory, “parents are uniquely positioned to invest their own talents into the skill development of their children, fostering in them tastes and preferences for schooling” (Ream, 2001 p. 31). Parents could also accrue a great deal of social capital including influence with teachers, school officials, and other stakeholders, in ways that could, if not directly help their children, still model school involvement in ways that improve student outcomes (Ream, 2001). Students also reflect the socioeconomic framework of their communities, meaning that students living in low-income communities were earmarked to fail in academic expectations compared with students from more affluent communities (Cashin, 2004). The assumption was that the payoff was greater for students with more schooling; students with lesser education were more likely to work at unskilled jobs (Carnevale, 1999).

The idea of social or cultural capital was used to critique built-in inequities in the educational system and to examine specific ways in which ethnic students respond to the deficits that they appear to have with regard to the system and thus perpetuate their own difficulties in the system (Anderson, 2006; Altschuler & Schmautz, 2005; Aroe & Nelson, 2000; Casanova, 2003; Diversi & Mecham, 2003; Howard, 2003; Jordan, 1997; Ream, 2001; Romero et al., 2000). In addition to the deficits of capital that they brought to school based on their backgrounds and family lives, Hispanic students also had to negotiate different cultures and choose to acculturate and assimilate or not to do so.

Summary

In the literature review, historical passages were explored as they pertained to the development of indigenous peoples from the Spanish conquest to the U.S. occupation. Since California statehood, Latinos have been impacted by a number of proposed and

enacted legislation. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was intended to bring peace and prosperity to all the people. However, during this period, Mexicans lost their land and were subject to cultural disestablishment. The coverage of Mexican work programs from different periods revealed the mainstream population to be prejudiced and that conflict persisted between two different cultural societies.

The periods selected in history were combined with the theoretical framework composed of the concepts of cultural context in assimilation, enculturation, oppression and collaboration, culture capital, and high and low context. The history and the concepts were selected to develop a strong background for understanding cultural differences between Latino students and Eurocentric, traditional academic settings. These sources were also used to examine the ways individuals and groups learn and employ different perceptions and the ways in which inequalities in classrooms that often serve to repeat the cycle of typical results could be eliminated. This exploration of the literature indicated that more research is needed in areas of professional development associated with programs or training for diverse learners.

As the Latino student population has increased, the need for culturally sensitive programs also has grown. Latino students have come from a cooperative and collaborative, group-oriented culture that is at odds with the competitive, individualistic culture valued in mainstream U.S. education. Thus, Latino students have often confused teachers in classrooms because of the student's lack of competitiveness. As a result, Latino students have been unable to live up to the competitive demands of public schools, especially in terms of test taking.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

Chapter 3 discusses why a qualitative approach applying cross-case analysis on previous case studies was appropriate for this study. The chapter also includes a description of the design, data sources, and data collection with a detailed description of the data collection procedures followed by a detailed explanation of the data analysis.

Factors Influencing This Type of Research

While Latino student population growth fills the classrooms, the importance of caring and including aspects of their high-context culture is neglected. Latino students' high school dropout rate has shown little improvement nationwide over the past two decades leading me to believe other factors were historically connected to Latino students' effectiveness in academic achievement. The opportunity to research Latino learning in a cultural context that contributed to improve academic learning matched with my ethnicity of Mexican ancestry and birthplace in the state of California. My personal experiences brought out ideas that were the picture of investigating across existing cases to focus on a larger scale to make the data richer and to ensure generalization from a broader view on what alternative approaches were used in California high schools in relationship to home culture and student learning. In the proposal stage, the exploration of selecting several cases with factors that are associated with addressing the research questions and related to the theory of this study set the stage for in-depth cases to pursue what successful alternative approaches were used within the walls of the public school among Latino high school students.

Benefits of Cross-case Analysis

A qualitative approach applying a cross-case analysis is a method that can provide in-depth knowledge within case studies (Khan, S. & VanWynsberghe, R., 2008). Engaging in a cross-case analysis extends the research beyond the single case to further accumulate knowledge and to find common ground across the cases (Khan, S. & Van Wynsberghe, R., 2008). In this research, each case study provides the lens from a micro-level that directly influences the effects of building a relationship between teacher and student. The technique of summarizing within case studies by simplifying the data to describe the case outcomes of particular studies "can yield explanatory insights" (Babbie, 2001, p. 285). With the assumption that all cases are equal, the technique can also be used to manage data to focus on practices that represent actions that are contributory to effective strategies in different conditions.

Overview of Understanding Cross-Case Analysis

This qualitative study employing a cross-case analysis "offer[ed] a means of investigating complex social [issues] consisting of multiple variables of potential importance . . . [resulting in] an important role in advancing a field's knowledge base" (Merriam, 1998, p. 41) in Latino culture and academic achievement. To make the cross-case analysis more "powerful for studying" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10) and "for what . . . [prior cases] reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29), the data collected from existing cases studies were examined repeatedly to yield patterns and features among the cases.

This type of research draws from a broader base of cases to find similarities within-case analysis making the findings richer and more in-depth in order to gain a

better understanding of what data fits with the existing theory and research questions. Studies that conduct a cross-case analysis can support a set of cases that demonstrate key elements of a problem and build from prior results of a particular phenomenon by conducting an analysis on each study then grouping them for essential common traits or factors across the cases revealing emerging new traits into broader generalization (Khan, S. & VanWynsberghe, R., 2008). For example, one study showed science teachers from a middle school feared integrating technology into the classroom in order to enhance their curricula. A cross-case analysis was conducted to find common themes among the science teachers relating to the integration and implementation of technology. The small-scale cross-case analysis enabled the researcher to compare the patterns of similarities and differences among science teachers. The lessons learned the researcher was able to pay greater attention that revealed shared knowledge of teacher's fears shifted to reflect a positive experience in teaching strategies and techniques associated with technology following technology integration. As a result, the researcher enhanced the contribution to the theory and research approach. (Wetzel, D, 2001). This example study provides evidence from across the cases, looking beyond the uniqueness of a single case, which aided in understanding the common function, theme, or issue in connecting the cases together; it kept the cases alive by making the data more refined to better understand the phenomenon (Stake, R., 2006). In a larger study, a national study of advocacy in gifted education was conducted through a qualitative study of six sites applying a cross-case analysis of surveys and existing cases studies. The team of researchers engaging in a cross-case analysis was able to further the concept development beyond the single case studies. The team of experienced case study researchers narrowed their caseload from 29

to six case studies. Case study researchers preserved the essence of the cases while analyzing case across the cases. While researchers wrote categories in the margins of the documents, the repeated exercise identified categories that emerged during the open coding process. After all the cases had been reviewed, an outline was created of document categories. The deducting of the cases was carefully analyzed too not strip the uniqueness of the case while emerging themes developed from applying the cross-case analysis. This analytic process opened the thinking to expose the ideas and thoughts that could discover the dimensions of the data (Strauss, A. & Corbin, J., 1998). As a result, the findings of the study found stronger focus on policymaking implementation and legislative activity that influenced the categories that emerged from the research (Robinson, A. & Sidney, M., 2003). In these two different studies, the themes generated from the data helping the researchers further explore the relationship between policy and performance in education.

Guiding Research Questions for this Study

To explore further the conditions under which Latino students improve their academic achievement, one focal question was addressed: How should classroom instruction be changed to address the differences between a traditional classroom culture and the cultural context of students who are Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry to improve academic achievement? Three other questions were identified based on the focal question:

1. What features in cultural sensitivity programs are of help to teachers in improving the learning ability of students who are Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry in Grades 9–12?

2. What key predictors are associated with cultural-specific programs that indicate the effects of culture on students consistent academic improvement and the effects of high-context culture in effective instruction for students who are Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry in stimulating student learning and improving scores in statewide testing?
3. What alternative instructional approach is necessary to facilitate recognizing and resolving different points of views among students of Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry?

Design of this Study

The design of this study purposefully incorporated steps intended to seek in-depth meaning and to understand the educational influences elicited in high schools that were genuinely focused on holistic academic learning and that included the adaptation of flexible alternative strategies to target the academic achievement needs of Latino students. The study began with a preliminary review of current research studies as the basis for identifying and retrieving previous case studies. The initial exercise of pretesting, a simple but intense method, was used to define the scope of the study. The retrieval process was conducted through a keyword search using the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database.

The retrieval process was conducted in the following sequence:

(a) initial keyword search;

(b) review of abstracts of interest;

(c) identification of key data associated with the literature and the research questions.

The keyword search began with a broad range of keywords to ensure data were not overlooked and time was not lost in conducting an expanded search at a later date. The following keywords were used: *accountability*, *funds of knowledge*, and *Hispanic student case study*. The idea was to extract only case studies in which qualitative approaches were employed. The preliminary review indicated that locating the information would be time consuming by using a trial-and-error approach.

Source of Previous Case Studies

The main instrument used in locating case studies was computer access to the Internet and ProQuest databases. Searches were conducted based on words from the research questions to establish the limits for the cases collected to ensure their relevance to the nature of this study. Data were collected from studies conducted between January 1999 and December 2010. This date range resulted in a final number of 21 cases accessed through electronic resources, specifically the ProQuest databases for published information about dissertations. For instance, the known setting was California high schools, Grades 9–12, in which Latino students comprised more than 50% of the student population. In addition, synonymous to "culturally responsive," "high-context culture," "low-context culture," "learning strategies relevant to Latino/Hispanic student improved academic learning," and others were essential in seeking multiple cases from which data were extracted.

According to Yin (1984), case studies may be a holistic design of an entire case or embedded in a "single case [in] defining the unit of analysis" (p. 47). The sources for this data collection were based on a cross-case connection of "continuous interaction between the theoretical issues being studied and the data being collected" (Yin, 1984, p. 56). The

repetitive process in identifying more words within the abstract and cursory review of the dissertation that expanded the search helped in getting more familiar in identifying the words and meaning that potentially developed into the final cut and establishing the data process strategies. In this study, the results provide supporting in-depth research using a cross-case analysis on previous case studies of features that influenced Latino students to improve their academic achievements. The way the data is collected from previous case studies makes this study more robust and appropriate for gaining a broader level of generalization concerning the relationship between Latino student learning and academic achievement. A more detailed description of the methods used is explained further below.

Data Collection

In the first stage of data collection, as noted earlier, a preliminary review was performed on a few cases based on a keyword search to "establish the criteria [of the retrieval process] . . . based on relevant criteria" (Merriam, 1998, p. 65) that corresponded with the central theme of the current study. This brief exercise resulted in valuable information; although, "usually it is not possible to catch a fuller meaning of the [cases] without careful review of the details" (Stake, 2006, p. 40) that is normally conducted during in-depth analysis in typical full-scale studies.

In the preliminary review, the retrieval process involved a keyword search that resulted in a variety of case studies that might or might not be related to the central theme of the research. The retrieval process started with two or more keywords chosen from the research questions. More words were added until the abstracts of the dissertations reflected descriptive language that was applicable in addressing the research questions. In the first phase of the retrieval process, the database search was conducted to select cases

with California high schools, ELs, or Hispanic/Latino students explicitly expressed within the summary description. The qualitative data were retrieved cases found using these eight keyword searches: (a) Hispanic student case study California, (b) California "high school" achievement programs for Hispanics, (c) California strategies in achievement "high school" programs for Hispanics, (d) California "high school" cultural programs for Hispanics, (e) California "high school" achievement, (f) California teacher efficacy in high schools, (g) California high performing high schools, and (h) Hispanic achievement programs in California. The search continued until the key data associated with the cases added little value and "a point of saturation or redundancy [was] reached" (Merriam, 1998, p. 64). The key data associations generated 1,026 search results, which were part of the cursory review online. A repeated process of reading abstracts online with attention to keywords that met the criteria (i.e., California high school, ELs, Latino/Hispanic students, etc.) was employed. A copy of each abstract that met the criteria was placed in a word document to create a database of 139 cases. This massive number of cases was refined through a brief review to determine those cases that referred (a) to populations with high percentages of Latinos (over 50%) enrolled in the high school and (b) to improved academics. To narrow the focus, the criteria were broadened through the addition of more words in the keyword search. This served to find dissertations related to Latino academic achievement, effective practices, and school programs, thus reducing the database to 60 case studies. Based again on repeating the process on reading and rereading the overviews and conclusions of the case studies to gather more information and develop insights into their meaning, the database was

reduced to the final phase which was reduced to 21 through careful screening of the remaining cases.

Therefore, the present study used 21 existing case studies to explore the factors contributing to effective patterns in academic learning for Latino students in Grades 9–12. Interpretation of the data did not come without challenges; but in using a cross-case analysis based on a qualitative approach, the knowledge of academic learning within the rapidly growing Latino student population and the effects of the traditional Eurocentric academic establishment could be constructed in the state of California.

Data Collection Screening within case studies. The abstract review with descriptive key segments of each case was the vehicle "under which . . . [a] particular phenomenon is likely to be found" (Yin, 1984, p. 49). It was also an "aid in understanding . . . the data once [they had] been collected" (Yin, 1984, p. 72). As the cursory review progressed, abstracts that met the criteria were copied into a word document to reduce the number of cases to relevant material, with the understanding that several cases might be worth studying in the context of the current research (Creswell, 1998). It was found during the cursory review that most of the school names had been changed. In terms of specific programs such as AVID, Puente, and others, the authors of the dissertations were used as the basis for gathering the data, with more reliance being placed "on [the researcher's] description and interpretation of data" (Merriam, 1998, p. 114) within case studies.

Although in the current research study a cross-case analysis was employed to collect data from previous case studies (requiring sifting through the data to seek relevant information to address the research questions), a case study approach was deemed

appropriate because it allowed for understanding the methodology researchers used in previous cases and for allowing me to be better prepared to analyze the collected data. However, during the data collection process, it became clear the case studies were focused less on building connections to Latino culture and more on improving state test scores. The details within the case data receded "behind the broad patterns found across a wide variety of cases" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 174) to identify features that emerged from the cross-case analysis.

In general, the quality of a case is based on a critical evaluation of the researcher's understanding and recognition of valid sources of data with the intent of examining the data with both sensitivity and skepticism (Stake, 1995). In the current study, after several reviews of the case abstracts and findings, a word document file was created that included information on 60 relevant cases. The selected cases were further examined to determine in which ones the purpose of the current study had been accomplished. This review resulted in reducing the number of cases to 21.

Another word document file was then created that contained a database for cross-case analysis. The descriptions included the case profile and the findings, emphasizing the holistic meaning in features and themes across the number of cases. Each of the 21 case studies was summarized according to the author's focus in the study. The summary descriptions for the 21 case studies collectively were more than 40 pages in length. The themes from previous case studies are shown in Table 1. The written brief summary within the case study was treated as data and the data have been presented in Appendix B because the findings from those case studies could be a distraction to the reader from the findings of the current research.

Table 1: Within Case Study Themes

Case	Themes
1	(a) ethnic identity, (b) critical awareness, (c) academic interests
2	(a) the safe school environment supported by the parents and community, (b) caring and patience, (c) parent networking, (d) leadership and high expectations
3	(a) political demands, (b) teacher collaboration professional development, (c) effective instruction
4	(a) effective instruction in arts appreciation, (b) student empowerment, (c) alternative learning in literacy and people skills, (d) cultural capital and ethnic identity, (e) meeting state standards, (f) education devaluation in arts, (g) connectedness
5	(a) high expectations of all students, (b) alternative programs for underachievers, (c) student data to assess student needs
6	(a) strong leadership, (b) student accountability, (c) sensitivity towards the student culture and caring of student's transition from traditional to alternative programs.
7	(a) small-size classrooms and targets at-risk students, (b) relationship between teacher and student.
8	(a) high school's vision for students to be college eligible, (b) state of the art technology to develop student skills, (c) career credential preparation, (d) cultural sensitivity.
9	(a) leadership, (b) collaboration and professional development, (c) organization in school policy and practices, (d) student support and meeting student needs
10	(a) organization, (b) leadership, (c) personalization, (d) effective instructional practices
11	(a) professional development, (b) instructional learning, (c) cultural identity
12	(a) cultural identity, (b) school programs, (c) parent involvement, (d) collaboration
13	(a) professional development, (b) college preparatory curriculum
14	(a) leadership, (b) school policy and master schedule, (c) professional development, (d) flexible instruction
15	(a) alternative programs, (b) effective instruction, (c) student support programs

16	(a) high expectations, (b) leadership and school culture, (c) student's culture
17	(a) leadership, (b) master schedule flexibility, (c) effective teaching strategies, (d) high school positive culture
18	(a) high school culture and philosophy, (b) leadership, (c) curriculum and instruction
19	(a) leadership, (b) teamwork and collaboration, (c) effective instruction, (d) improved test scores
20	(a) leadership, (b) alternative programs and direct instruction, (c) student and teacher relationship
21	(a) leadership, (b) collaboration and teamwork, (c) teacher and student relationship, (d) effective instruction

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began with an in-depth reading of each case study. This type of analysis was used to formulate thick descriptive and interpretative analysis from the data collected inform the 21 source case studies. This approach was appropriate for capturing the complexity of the cases, including gathering in-depth insights and descriptions to refine the understanding of particular situations (Stake, 1995). Furthermore, a range of similar cases could be grouped under a common finding, "grounding it by specifying *how* and *where* and, if possible, *why* it carries on as it does" (Merriam, 1998, p. 40). In the selection process, more cases were found that did not contribute to strengthening new meaning and were not included. The exclusion included cases that could have weakened support of the evidence and the emphasis on the holistic meaning in the features and themes across the number of cases. The qualitative research was deemed holistic in nature, which was the most relevant approach to understanding the recognition of cultural needs and to stressing the point of view of cultural context.

The narrative of each was developed to draw out the significant areas to understand the case better before moving to the next step of cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These in-depth case studies were analyzed by using data analysis strategies to increase understanding and explanation of the given descriptions (Miles, M. & Huberman, A., 1994; Stake, R. 2006). The exercise was repeated, as needed, to get a better understanding of the data and their fit within the theoretical framework. To "pin down the specific conditions under which a finding [across cases] occurs" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 172), each case study was analyzed with the aid of a worksheet. The worksheet was developed using Stake's (2006) book, which included a number of worksheets available online. During the reading of each case, key information was posted on the worksheet (synopsis of the case, themes, findings, uniqueness of the case study, theoretical relevance, and other factors) reducing the data to sort within case findings into general categories related to features that resulted in student improvement. This process consisted of reading and putting the information together within categories, themes, and patterns until it yield new insight or until theoretical saturation had been achieved. Previous case studies were examined using a cross-case analysis to cluster or group cases according to patterns in order to identify variables that might have otherwise been undetected (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1984). As the data were organized by category, the essential predictors became more transparent. The evaluation was repeated several times. This effort in layering and refining the meaning of patterns under which similarities occurred that formed the indicators of the relationships (Miles & Huberman, 1994) across the cases resulted in knowledge through setting the foundation and developing emerging patterns into a common focus.

After all the cases had been analyzed, the management of interpretation across the cases was gathered into common themes or features (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 2006). Then, the data were evaluated against specific programs and alternative approaches to determine the extent to which the predictors reflected effective teaching among Latino students in Grades 9 – 12. The final review of each case study was documented in the same basic format: purpose of the study, related findings, and themes identified, which have been documented in Appendix B. After extensive review, a list of general categories was formulated: (a) alternative interventions, (b) caring, and (c) culturally responsive teaching/pedagogy. These general categories helped to understand the features connected to Latino student learning. The research questions were also referenced as a reminder that certain common profiles existed in all case studies.

Summary

Data were collected from qualitative and mixed method design dissertation studies conducted between January 1999 and December 2010 in California high schools where Latino students in grades 9–12 and comprised more than 50% of the student population. These studies were focused on processes relevant to improving student academic achievement among Latino students. These studies were examined to narrow the findings and to become more familiar with each study. Collecting data from schools to trace effective predictors identified through culturally sensitive programs among Hispanic students in Grades 9–12 presented a challenge in that most academic progress reports were not categorized by program. The reports, normally communicated in a quantitative format, were focused on either student or school results. The cases yielding education processes or alternative programs were accessed from reliable data sources

associated with factors relative to successful predictors. After becoming familiar with the programs, the data were analyzed to identify the predictors of success linked to culturally sensitive processes or holistic teaching approaches in effectively teaching Latino students.

At the proposal stage, I reviewed a few case studies for the school name and the name of program. Additional information was then retrieved through the California Department of Education Web site. However, this information along with the existing case studies of school data on specific programs or alternative approaches was not available for all cases that the sources used to generate a broad list of data was limited to features in the case study that contributed to effective instruction related to the academic achievement of Latino students.

Data analysis revealed the cultural aspects of formal learning and their contributions to intervention strategies employed to resolve cultural conflict between the education system and Latino students. The data included findings from 21 previous case studies on Latino student learning and academic achievement.

The previous case studies were either qualitative or mixed methods research found in published dissertations from credited universities located within the state of California that were accessed through ProQuest databases. The 21 case studies varied in content in terms of performance time period analyzed, data collection, and data analysis, and these differences accounted for an unequal amount of data to examine for each case. To keep all case studies equal, the data gathered were focused within the case studies on key components related to the research questions. Doing so reduced the data to important information and the characteristics connected to academic achievement among Latino

students, making it more manageable. The features were selected from case studies that shared a common profile of California high schools, improved academic achievement, and direct influences on Latino student learning. In addition, the 21 case studies were the sources upon which the database was built for the cross-case analysis and to identify emerging themes in terms of improving academic achievement among Latino students.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings

Although in the state of California the proportion of Latino students in the student population is 50.37% (or 3,118,404 of 6,190,425 students; California Department of Education, 2010b), in the case studies examined Latinos comprised 50% to 99% of the student populations. Also, case studies were chosen in which there was proportionately high percentages of Latino students (more than 50%). As well as, alternative programs that focus on Latino student academic achievement that was based on high schools that had either involuntarily made changes to curriculum or made changes based on academic achievement rather than focusing on programs that related to Latino culture as the primary cause of improved academic achievement. With the background in Mexican history provided in the literature review and a general discussion on the Latino student population summarized below, a greater understanding concerning the undervaluation of Latino and Mexican people in U.S. history is evident. The common characteristics found across the cases in answer to the research questions were categorized into three common themes: alternative interventions, caring, and culturally responsive teaching/pedagogy. These themes with sub-categories reflected the major components affecting the Latino student's academic achievement.

Hispanic/Latino People

Within the rapid growth of the Hispanic population in the United States, Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry accounts for the majority (64%) of the Hispanic group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). In California alone, the Hispanic population is 36% of the total population of the state compared with 15.1% of the national population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

Latino student issues. The majority (78%) of the California Hispanic population is composed of Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). However, culture-based achievement programs have been limited, pushed aside by more urgent budget constraints focused on overall school ratings. More than ever, formal education has been linked to employment and higher-paying jobs (NCES, 2003); however, the potential loss of Latino student talents through discouragement and low expectations that are the outcomes of poor education could result in economic loss for the United States. The events that influence the youth and the extent to which efforts are focused in formal education influence upward mobility and the climb toward a higher status must start with high school academic achievement. According to Freire (2004), in failing to acknowledge culture, humans are seen "as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (p. 84). This limited understanding has resulted in a classroom climate focused primarily on a traditional dominant thinking that has been carried forward from generations past of Anglo-American culture.

To attempt to balance the scale, alternative programs have been employed to reinforce the cultural relationship between Latino students and academic achievement processes that are more compatible to Latino student learning. Because education is the essence of progress in human capital, denial of earnest validation of Latino students home culture as part of the school curriculum has resulted in diminishing the importance of Latino people's contributions to social capital.

Alternative Interventions

The ideology of American formal education has been costly for some Mexican students trying to earn high school diplomas. Throughout history, the dominant culture in American society has continued to prepare individuals from another culture to assimilate into the mainstream establishment (Avruch, 2000), presuming the style of the dominant culture used to deliver education should be successful in other cultures. Across the cases analyzed in this study, sub-categories emerged that contributed to Latino student learning. These sub-categories included smaller school size, a family-like environment, smaller class sizes, and teachers caring attitudes were factors in getting Latino students past the eroding low esteem created from previous school experiences. These findings are summarized in the following sections.

Small high schools. The findings revealed high schools with safe, clean, secure campuses, openness, and comfortable surroundings were environments that fit student's personal and academic needs, especially for Latino students who were below grade level. Smaller high schools with staffs equipped to face student challenges were essential in addressing Latino student's different levels of academic performance. High school staff member quoted from one of the previous case studies: "I know that a lot of kids get really, really surprised when I'm sitting out there and I try to rush them to class and I call them by name and they kind of do a double take. At that point they react and they notice that...somebody actually knows who they are" (Pickett, 2007, p. 84, said in case 6). In smaller high schools, students felt the connectedness of small communities, resulting in a sense of security and closeness in which students could feel the caring of the staff. The guidance and supportive role of the teaching staff explained by assistant principal:

"Knowing the whole child - that's where we as a small school are blessed. Being a small learning community, we know our kids on a different level, what their abilities are" (Kershner, 2008, p. 177, said in case 8). In high schools with smaller class sizes, closer relationships and connectedness between teachers and students could be generated. Also, (see Appendix B: Case Studies 6, 8, 15, 18 & 20).

Small class size. The number of students in a classroom has been found to affect the amount of material covered and the amount of time the teacher attends to student needs. Research findings showed that with smaller class sizes, Latino students could receive the special attention they needed to strengthen their learning abilities. Teacher's assigned smaller classes provided environments of personal attention in which they ensured students, especially Latino students, felt connected, improved their academic learning, and built their learning skills. Teachers could manage their time to assess student data and provide feedback to strengthen student learning. In such high schools, teacher's implemented rigorous curriculum using holistic approaches to reverse students poor learning habits and challenged students to acquire the knowledge necessary to develop a foundation of self-confidence and a desire for higher expectations Further, the effects of Latino students exposed to friendly classroom environments in which teacher's exercised patience and sensitive to their issues became more engaged in academic learning and were better prepared to pass their courses (see Appendix B: Case Studies 7, 8, 14 & 15).

Smaller class sizes along with teachers caring attitudes were reinforcing to students. Encouraging words of positive feedback resulted in improved behavior and learning habits in Latino students and in promoting greater aptitude in academic learning.

The findings in previous case studies indicated that with smaller classes, teachers had more latitude to choose alternative methods to meet student issues. Quoted from principal said in case 3, (Flores, 2007):

> The department chair comes along and starts talking and working with teachers. … He comes in and gets his team to buy into common assessments, organizes them. He is one of those guys who is an absolute master at being direct with people, making decisions but not doing so in such a way that he forgoes the cohesiveness of his team. You look at our CAHSEE scores jump dramatically and if you look at our standards test results, they jump dramatically. Teachers begin to say these kids are learning a little bit more, I can see why we are doing this now (p. 148).

Furthermore "There has been a fundamental change in how teachers work as a department and now how they think. Teachers are beyond their old conception of how things should be done in the math department" (Flores, 2007, p. 153, said in case 3). Teachers could examine student issues in more detail, allocate time to assess data with their peers, and adjust learning materials more readily to fit student needs. As students were exposed to a holistic style of education, overtime, a closer relationship was built between teacher and student resulting in greater student learning (see Appendix B: Case Studies 3, 18 & 19).

In contrast, the research indicated Latino students who entered classes too large for special attention blended in with students who had poor learning habits and eventually failed to meet full performance at grade level. Students below grade level could not compete with students in magnet school programs or enroll in advanced placement (AP)

courses to advance in core courses to become college eligible. Thus, Latino students were treated differently. Because they were thought to be lazy or not wanting to learn, Latino students received less attention and less support in subjects such as mathematics, science, and English, which were vital to fulfilling high school requirements. A teacher explained: "They are very, very lazy and wanting to do their thing and not do what you would like them to do. To associate importance to a lecture, to be able to get them to understand the importance… it's virtually impossible because their minds are elsewhere" (Masumoto, 2006, p. 210, said in case 20). Teachers focus more on students that showed interest in learning. The principal attested some teachers resisted to change: " They are still using the same educational pedagogy that cause kids to fail in the first place, so until we change that equation, we are wasting money. This staff does not know how to address underperforming students" (Kim, 2009, p. 111, said in case 10). Teachers who treated all students the same made it more difficult for Latino students to engage or connect with classroom curricula (see Appendix B: Case Studies 10, 16, & 20).

On the other hand, a staff member explained: "Our kids are pretty close knit. ….The faculty is good about trying to help, they [teachers] love our kids" (Masumoto, 2006, p. 209, said in case 20). Teachers who worked outside the traditional pattern in a language synonymous to Latino learning became more aware of Latino issues. For example, teachers who applied simple examples to complex problems modeled after their self-interests or who employed nontraditional creative approaches such as theatrical scenes increased Latino students interest in learning and formed a meaningful attachment to students academic learning (see Appendix B: Case study 10).

Classroom instruction. Teachers who supplemented methods of growth with patience and flexibility helped students to be more confident and to feel a sense of fairness in the classroom. In most urban classrooms, students complained that most teachers were "formal and display[ed] a narrow focus on instructional task[s]" (Monzo & Rueda, 2003, p. 442). If, with minority students, teachers also developed lower expectations or stumbled into "misunderstandings based on discontinuities between the school and the home" (Monzo & Rueda, p. 442), the situation worsened. High school practices in which the Latino culture was excluded from academic learning in the classroom environment resulted in more difficulty interconnecting the processes of instruction and the influences that result in improving Latino student academic learning. If the objective in student learning was to teach students to memorize facts then the end justifies the means. However, if the systematic method tended to result in lessening the value of alternative learning and creating the potential to overlook the suffering of Hispanic students from "steadily increasing isolation" (Orfield, 2001, p. 43) in the classroom.

Previous case studies revealed classrooms décor could also be used to reinforce higher expectations. As described by researcher wrote: "A mural recently completed by the art students displayed the Lee High School logo with the words, 'Respect, Responsibility, Renewal.' As the researcher admired it, one of the art students who had worked on the mural walked by and shared, I did that!" (Pickett, 2007, p. 90, said in case 6). Posters of the school vision, phrases to remind students to reflect on college requirements, and positive remarks for students work were all possible ways to reinforce higher expectations. Such positive displays were helpful in building Latino students self-

confidence in focusing on better academic outcomes (See Appendix B: Case studies 2, 6, 17, & 21).

Another effective arrangement within the classroom was the use of small groups. With student groups of approximately four students, teachers could check students' understanding of the material and provide an environment of teamwork in which the students' interactions created an environment familiar to Latino students, that of the family. In such an environment, teachers could interject a sense of humor, have students warm up on a set of review problems covering previously learned material, and then instruct students who were formed into small groups. As the students completed their assignments and checked their answers in front of the classroom, the small groups were mechanisms for camaraderie that resulted in responsibility and collaboration among the students (see Appendix B: Case studies 5 & 10).

Cornell note-taking. Cornell note taking was an important part of classroom participation. Teachers who faced large class sizes that included Latino students behind grade level who may have emotional issues from past school experiences used Cornell note taking to help students understand material better and to reinforce key areas to prepare for tests. This method became a useful tool to achieve better study habits that resulted in improved test scores. Teachers stated: "Cornell Notes, thinking maps, and student engagement are three strategies that we used school wide….It is the key to everything the students can do because they can do it in their (Varee, 2008, p. 81, said in case 14). Latino students were more engaged and could see better outcomes in their academic learning. Teachers could pinpoint student weaknesses in their study habits. For example, in implementing the Cornell note taking, teachers could present examples to

help students understand the material and point out common mistakes in problem solving, coaching the students to improve their test scores (see Appendix B: Case studies 13, 14, & 21).

However, Cornell note taking is an added tool best used in smaller classes, particularly when classes include Latino students who are several years behind grade level. In the smaller classes, students could receive special attention to strengthen their learning abilities. If students required further assistance to meet full performance, tutorial sessions were another alternative approach for Latino students to close the achievement gap.

Paraprofessional staff. Paraprofessional staff could be used to supplement teacher instruction to create a sense of discovery for Latino students. This strategy reflected what could be done if efforts were focused on students strengths and weaknesses. In their study, Monzo and Rueda (2003) examined whether Hispanic teachers or paraprofessionals were better able to connect with Hispanic students because of their commonality of culture. The researchers found, generally, that

> familiarity with students, their language, cultures and communities and the sociocultural factors that impact their lives both at a group level and at an individual level can be used in important ways to support learning and foster an interest in school. (Monzo & Rueda, 2003, p. 464)

They also showed that having Hispanic teachers is good for Hispanic students. Paraprofessionals from a Latino/Hispanic backgrounds were also better prepared to address the student challenges between Latino student culture and academic learning. This was especially true in large classes with a high proportion of Latino students. In

these classes, teachers and paraprofessionals could intersect elements as cohesive units working together to address student questions. Doing so was an example of the sense of caring in the learning process. Making this view explicit, teachers could increase their knowledge in meeting Latino student needs and bridge the caring between teacher and student (see Appendix B: Case study 15).

Instructional coaches. To increase Latino student grade point averages, instructional coaches worked with teachers in their classrooms to improve teaching strategies. In some high schools in which instructional coaches were used, great strides in API scores were made, especially for Latino students. Instructional coaches gained knowledge through classroom observations and other means to determine the strategies that worked well in engaging student activity. Their expertise was normally aligned with state standards and high school constraints in assessing curriculum and in addressing teacher issues. Instructional coaches could present a criterion to aid teachers in improving teaching strategies that, in turn, improved student learning. For example, teachers who set aside times to work with instructional coaches were open to accepting effective instruction in scaffolding instructional strategies to improve However, high schools that had limited resources "instead use]d] their limited collaboration time and the expertise of the leadership team to accomplish the tasks of aligning curriculum, developing assessments and coaching teachers" (Coulter, 2009, p. 101, said in case 5). Teachers working together sharing student data and teaching strategies promoted more effective cohesive units that drew from instructional coaches expertise or other teachers expertise and students learning patterns (see Appendix B: Case studies 5, 9 & 18).

Caring

Research findings in a number of instances of previous case studies (see Appendix B: Case Studies 6, 7, 10, & 15) showed teachers' caring attitudes that touched the student home culture positively impacted how students responded to wanting to learn and helped students to engage in meeting full performance expectations. A teacher's key component in helping Latino students achieve success was to identify student needs and to understand the issues that could prevent the students from succeeding. Teachers, who viewed Latino student's lack of accomplishments in meeting full performance expectations as not caring about school, restricted their thinking in understanding social and cultural aspects of Latino students. Doing so resulted in Latino student acceptance of the public education perception of failure as their destiny. However, students who responded positively if caring was genuine by teachers showed interest in their "well-being inside and outside the classroom, and [were] always available to the student" (Garza, 2009, p. 316) students were inclined to be more encouraged to improve their learning.

At-risk students. Teachers who sought out holistic approaches to bring together students cultural identities and to promote positive outlooks concerning academic learning enhanced closer relationships and connectedness between teacher and student (see Appendix B: Case studies 6,7, & 13). With smaller classes, often learning the informal learning patterns of Latino students became a more natural process. In one of the classrooms, 17 students' appeared to be Hispanic and the teacher shared that six of them were mothers. A student explained, the teacher "involved himself with his students and got to know them and that he did a lot of extra things for the student body" (Tanakeyowma, 2009, p. 98, said in case 13). This approach embodied a mode of caring

that worked well with Latino students behind grade level. In previous cases, the findings consistently showed that Latino students, often labeled at-risk, entered alternative high schools below grade level. Student personal issues, poor habits in class, preparedness, and absenteeism were challenges difficult to overcome. Because Latino student academic learning was shaped through the years by the dominant culture, the public school culture was inherently similar to low-context cultures.

Valenzuela (1999) concluded "caring pedagogy considers the strengths that youth brings with them to school alongside [past school experiences and behavior issues] that [may] disrupt what would otherwise be a more natural development of those strengths" (p. 115). Thus, students accepted views of their inability to learn or to perform academically as being normal. The teacher's role was to teach; but without knowledge of how students experienced learning or expending energy to be more involved in student development, teachers experienced few rewards (Brookfield, 1995; Zwiers, 2008). Research revealed teachers who lacked proper training or skills to connect effectively with Latino students found it more difficult to help Latino students meet full performance. Student failure in a course could result in frustration or discouragement for Latino students once again. However, the data indicated Latino students who enrolled in AP courses found the experiences helped them to acquire higher levels of learning and become desirous of higher expectations (see Appendix B: Case studies 13, 14 & 20). The meaning connected to the student's challenges was overlooked when teachers were focus on test scores rather than higher expectations. However, a teacher who appreciates the "importance of interest that all minds [do not think] in the same way because they happen

to have the same teacher and textbook (Dewey, 1944, p. 130) could reveal a sense of caring in relation to student learning.

Culturally responsive teaching/pedagogy. A primary way in which funds of knowledge is implemented has been for the teacher to acknowledge the value of the home culture of the student and to allow the student to bring elements of that culture into the classroom context. That is, "instead of treating students home cultures, native languages and ways of thinking and communicating as obstacles to learning or problems to be solved, teachers should capitalize on students home culture while explicitly teaching the mainstream culture" (Casanova, 2003, p. 16). Teachers informed concept of human activity practiced in the classroom constituted collective reinforcement of social skills in responsibility potentially unfolding into a strong framework modeled after the culturally responsive funds of knowledge pedagogical approach. A teacher explained high school culture: "We are constantly telling our new teachers about how great our students are. We regularly encourage teachers to participate with students outside of their own classrooms. We lead by modeling and recognize and praise teachers and staff who are involved" (Alpern, 2008, p. 77, case 17). This approach to the skills of diverse students is an attempt to bridge the division between home and school cultures by viewing home culture not as a deficit to be overcome (as is too often the case even in the social capital perspective of critical theory) but as a fund of knowledge to be built upon (Casanova, 2003).

Latino culture. In general, the American educational system has been "assumed to be the best in the world and equally applicable to all peoples and must therefore be imposed upon . . . [everyone] without regard to their own culture" (Hall, 1989, p. 210).

Conflict is part of reality. When conflict is mishandled it can cause harm to the relationship. Just as misunderstandings by teachers of high-context cultural behavior could be erased if the teacher handles the conflict with respect and caring. Conflict arises from different needs, if the teacher becomes aware of the cultural values it can open up opportunities and growth strengthening the relationship between student and teacher. In addition, gaps in perception and understanding could be chased from the classroom if the teacher transforms the classroom and the pedagogy within the classroom from a low-context to a high-context place (Abramovitz et al., 2001; Kitayama & Ishii, 2002; Smith, 1980; Stuber, 2005; Wurtz, 2005). For example, although Mexican or Latino studies are important parts of American history, in general, teachers have been unprepared to teach curriculum in Latino studies because of the limited courses offered in public high schools and the shortage of teachers who could draw from personal and professional experiences relative to Mexican or Latino culture. In one of the cases the teacher explained: "it is now a neighborhood school, but it still has a good mix of cultures. It has kept the welcoming culture, and I think the students are happy. It does have a majority of lower middle class students" (Ett, 2008, p118, said in case 2). Generally, teaching experience directly related to understanding the differences between Latino students' culture and academic learning has been drawn from dominant traditional influences on public schools, which were normally informed their perceptions of Latino students academic learning. Research findings show teachers with passion and perseverance in teaching courses in Chicano studies added historical importance to American history and connections to Latino culture as it related to their heritage. After taking Chicano studies, a student explained: "I just kind of ignored [Latino history]. It wasn't a big thing to me. I didn't think much

about it.... But now I have the knowledge to be proud and understand the race I come from …I am just proud that my race has kept fighting all the hardships" (Ramirez, 2008, p. 92, case 1). Teachers with a strong Mexican heritage who could draw from their own personal experiences from Mexico and the United States in Mexican and Latin American history could connect to the students' home culture. Students could then reclaim their culture and language within academic settings. In addition, Latino students who enrolled in the Latino courses transformed their educational experience and became more empowered to pursue higher goals (see Appendix B: Case studies 1 & 4).

On the other hand, few courses were offered in high schools specifically addressing Mexican or Latino heritage. Teachers with strong Mexican or Latino heritages were essential in overcoming a number of obstacles arising between teachers and students. This was especially true in understanding Latino student's home culture, which had a different meaning in history than the culture of Anglo American teachers (see Appendix B: Case studies 10 & 12).

In-depth learning of another perspective must come with an understanding of an individual's history of experiences. However, such perspectives could be challenged by "tendencies to perceive life as . . . experienced" (Zwiers, 2008, p. 83). U.S. history curricula have been inundated with "Eurocentric places, government systems culture . . . concepts, such as individualism, democracy, . . . [that] might be less emphasized in student's home cultures" (Zwiers, 2008, p. 84). The emphasis was unidirectional resulting in students from diverse backgrounds "feel[ing] uncomfortable expressing [their] opinions during the classroom discussions" (Zwiers, 2008, p. 85).

Curriculum through the arts to connect to Latino culture. Teachers who taught drama courses or similar kinds of courses with a majority of Latino students enrolled were challenged to obtain relevant material and sources on Latino culture to integrate into the curriculum. Teachers who taught devalued courses asked students to create their own vignettes that have personal meaning to them. Vignette activities were written in English and Spanish to bridge the two languages and cultures to connect to academic learning. Students asked their parents about their experiences and memories of their backgrounds and wrote journals to bring back to class to share with their peers. In keeping with the meaning of the students' history and culture, teachers sought literature to help students to connect with their heritage. Such exercises were used to promote more interaction with a curriculum in which Latino students home culture was recognized. One of the student said: "Once I got up on stage… I saw in the faces of my peers excitement so….this brought confidence … We got a few laughs here and there which made me even more enthusiastic about my enunciation in front of this group. It was an experience that cannot be put down in words" (Coleman, 2007, p. 83, case 4). Overtime, this learning resulted in patterns that work well for Latino students in enabling them to feel confident and more engaged in adapting to active learning (see Appendix B: Case studies 4).

Teachers used different genres in rigorous joint writing and reading exercises to develop a foundation in reading comprehension and in oral and written communication in a rich Latino culture. Thus, teachers encouraged students to create a meaningful dialogue that included a reflection of Latino students sociocultural and integration of the caring that fostered better understanding between home culture and academic learning. One of the students wrote: "I did not like the idea of getting paired up with someone I hardly

knew, but to my surprise it was not hard all…and I became more open-minded towards others" (Coleman, 2007, p. 89, case 4). Drama courses were one alternative approach in education centered on activities in which students take on roles to act out meanings connected to their experiences, problem solving, team work, and other processes of oral and written communication that work well with Latino high-context culture (see Appendix B: Case studies 2 & 4).

Because high-context communication occurs in the context of relationships, a great deal of indirectness in the communication is possible. In high-context situations, the interlocutors say things indirectly but expect the listeners to understand (Salleh, 2005). High-context communication is more emotional and involves a closer relationship than rational and linear communication (Salleh, 2005). In promoting academic achievement outside traditional teaching, teachers could infuse the practice of engaging "a culturally sensitive curriculum . . . [and a sense] that all students feel included" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 100). Holistic teaching style and a flexible structure in which teachers devote their time and energy to enriching a drama curriculum culturally sensitive to customs, values, language, and patterns could result in Latino students progressing to higher expectations.

Arts appreciation courses were also an important piece of Latino culture. Latino students taking the course were found to have more self-confidence in their cultural identity when they completed the course. In addition, these students were better prepared to increase their grade point averages and more inspired to face challenges in academic learning. Teachers employing nontraditional approaches could foster the value of student culture without sacrificing or impeding their growth in other courses. Although one could argue that learning one's culture and history should be the purview of the home (Chavez,

1991), if educators were to put the value of cultural context into practice, Latino students could be inspired through such major changes in the classroom.

Puente program. Through the Puente Program, originally aimed at addressing low Mexican American or Latino rates in academic achievement through bridging the concept of *familia* and building a sense of community, considerable attention has been focused on instruction in reading and writing, on academic counseling, and on mentoring. Since its inception and success, the program has been extended to other minority groups. In this program, teachers are trained to encourage critical thinking about possible student interpretations of new information presented in class and the ways in which students may deal with that information.

In the professional development sessions, the emphasis is on collaboration, empowerment, and cultural sensitivity to reinforce the meaning of "walking in someone's shoes" (students) and to understand the disempowerment students may face when teachers perceive Latino students as not wanting to learn to justify the difficulty they have in learning the material. Teachers new to the program sometimes transferred the knowledge from the Puente training into their classrooms through trial and error. At times, teachers explained the exercises so that students would reflect on what they wrote, focusing on understanding the meaning behind the words instead of seeing the writing as exercises in structure rather than expression. Students' perspectives on effective instruction explained: "A teacher who makes us work, and who explains things, and that's it….They should explain things in a way we understand. The way they like talk to us when we have a problem. They know how to talk to us about that problem" (Jewell, 2006, p. 43, case 11). Seasoned Puente teachers were able to connect student's history

through activities advocated by the Puente program and they were better equipped to contribute to exercises modeled after the program. These exercises, for example, included reading Latino poetry. The venue in which the poetry was read could be an example for students to express in writing their own meanings to connect to their cultural identity (see Appendix B: Case studies 11).

Incorporating multiculturalism, including interest in more than one culture outside the mainstream accepted culture, was a challenge for the disproportionate culture of the "majority of teacher candidates, teachers, and administrators" (Attinasi, 1994, p. 1). In reality, Latino students were involved with two different cultures, family and country. When they walked into the classroom, "the linguistic and cultural resources that bilingual children bring [were] suppressed and at best ignored" (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999, p. 427).

Chapter 5: Cross-Case Data Analysis and Discussion of the Central Themes

The cross-case analysis commenced with a continuous search of the cases until predictability and cross-connections between the cases relevant to the current study were determined which identified themes across the cases. This approach involved examining the case studies carefully for the essential elements in the patterns expected on a theoretical basis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1984). Thus, the examination had to be repeated several times to get a better understanding of the within case studies before examining the cross-case studies. Depending on the "conditions under which a particular phenomenon is likely to be found (literal replication) as well as the conditions when it is not like to be found (a theoretical replication)" (Yin, 1984, p. 49), the theoretical framework of case studies was open to various interpretations in examining across case studies. Even though the findings varied in individual cases, new perspectives could result in new insights from accumulating and refining the knowledge to a set of ideas (Yin, 1984). Through a cross-case analysis, teaching practices and Latino learning in different high school environments could be explored; the effects of certain factors on Latino student achievement and the relationship of a single case to other cases could be determined. This was crucial to identifying patterns in the connections between culturally responsive pedagogy, holistic instructional approaches, and Latino student learning. However, the narrative of each case was developed to draw out the significant areas to understand the case better before moving to the next step of cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Although the data analysis addressed the research questions, the data collection indicated these high schools had been mandated to make changes because of low average state test scores and the initial drive was to work toward student

achievement. In sum, during various features revealing specific practices relevant to improving academic achievement for Latino students emerged across the cases that were categorized into three general themes: (a) alternative interventions, (b) caring, and (c) culturally responsive teaching/pedagogy.

Theme 1: Alternative Interventions

In public school systems as a whole, the power structure of the elite and most aspects of the existing social system have been reproduced, including the pedagogic principles, which have been rooted in social class systems and "require familiarization with the dominant culture and all its beliefs, behaviors and ideals" for one to succeed (Howard, 2003, p. 198). Throughout history, the dominant culture in American society has "trie[d] to find a way to educate, train, or prepare individuals from one culture to work in another" (Avruch, 2000, p. 59) presuming the style of the dominant culture used to deliver education should also be successful in other cultures. The ideology of American formal education has been found to be costly for some Mexican students trying to earn high school diplomas.

Impact of converted high school culture on Latino students. Smaller schools could provide the feelings of connectedness found in smaller communities in which students have a sense of security and opportunities to encounter feelings of caring from the school staffs. However, specialized programs and more resources were more readily available in larger schools than in smaller schools (Kahne et al., 2011). EL (English Learner) students in California, most of whom speak Spanish (85%) and are primarily children of Mexican immigrants or persons of Mexican American ancestry, have presented additional costs to the state, acutely affecting the appropriate training and

staffing of teachers to meet the needs of Latino students ("Comparing California," 2008). The significant growth of the Latino population and Latino student enrollment and the increased numbers of students at-risk or on the verge of dropping out were being placed in smaller high schools.

In Case 10, when a failing larger high school was converted into several smaller schools, one of the six smaller schools was dedicated to ELs. Administrators and teachers from the existing staff of the larger high school were bilingual (English and Spanish), with the exception of one school counselor who transferred from the larger high school into the smaller high school in which Latino students comprised 94% of the school enrollment. These teachers came with the attitude of wanting to teach students to succeed, especially teachers who were former EL students. Those teachers had strong feelings of wanting to help students improve their learning despite the challenges the teachers would face in a new school and in teaching students below full performance. Although the smaller school was designed to reduce class size, a method to improve Latino students learning, the EL learners' class size surpassed that of other classes within the high school. This overflow was a contributing factor to the dedication of one high school to teaching EL learner courses that EL students attended every other day. However, this worked against the students excelling more efficiently in academic achievement.

Data suggested that segregating EL Latino students into one group in one common place was done to ensure education was applied consistently to EL students with the same needs. Organizing the bilingual administrators and teachers into one high school and the one large structure into smaller organizations immediately formed a new

framework even though the former conditions remained. The school principals from high-performing schools associated with EL programs stressed the following important features for

> ensuring that teachers have knowledge and skills needed to support EL students, . . . deliberately fostering academic language and literacy development across the curriculum . . . also . . . strategies to support EL academic achievement such as sustained, on-site technical assistance and professional development. (California Department of Education, 2006, p. IV–1)

In addition, Latino students were more involved in the education process when school leadership recognized possibilities of beneficial development in a curriculum in which a greater understanding was conceptualized and a culture highly sensitive to Latino students learning was integrated.

Also in Case 10, teachers used the whiteboard to write each student name and placed a check by each name when the student completed homework. These teachers added a second list for students on detention, which resulted in improved student behavior on the surface because the student was embarrassed or remained silent. This method of instruction affected student participation inside the classroom, and teachers showed discontent with the results of students who struggled in learning. This systematic method tended to result in lessening the value of alternative learning and potentially overlooking the suffering of Hispanic students from “steadily increasing isolation” (Orfield, 2001, p. 43) in classrooms.

Case 10 indicated that teachers who worked outside the traditional patterns in a language synonymous to Latino learning became more aware of Latino issues.

Mathematics teachers taught algebra and geometry by applying simple examples to complex problems modeled after teacher's self-interests and hobby projects. The teachers approached various methods making meaning of student different needs into caring messages through understanding and refining the messages in particular ways with assertive efforts to not ignore cultural values. The English teacher staged theatrical scenes, and the teacher's persuasive methods served to engage students in academic learning. With these creative approaches, Latino students increased their interest in learning and in improving their grades.

In most urban classrooms, students complained that most teachers "were formal and display[ed] a narrow focus on instructional task[s]" (Monzo & Rueda, 2003, p. 442). When teachers also developed lower expectations for minority students or stumbled into "misunderstandings based on discontinuities between the school and the home" (Monzo & Rueda, 2003, p. 442), the situation worsened. Student experiences in environments in which their cultural value was separated from their learning abilities had more difficulty in interconnecting the process of instruction with factors that resulted in improving the academic learning of Latino students.

In Case 6, enrollment in the continuation high school was composed of at-risk students, 86% of who were Latino students. This type of school was created to give troubled students who performed poorly and resisted authority another chance by transferring them into a smaller high school aimed at helping students earn their high school diplomas. Faced with the academic and behavioral challenges of these at-risk students, the principal and teaching staff worked collaboratively to meet the student's personal and academic needs. The family-like environment, small class size, and teachers

caring attitudes about students past experiences were reinforcement for the encouraging phrases that convinced teachers positive feedback replaced students low self-esteem. The secure high school had a safe, clean, open appearance. The principal and teachers were comfortable with the surroundings, and teachers had few hindrances to developing appropriate curriculum and instructional processes to fit students personal and academic needs.

At-risk students enrolled in another school were capable of failing again, which played with student emotions. Even in smaller high schools with staffs equipped to face student challenges, the schools were required to deal with student practices set by the prior larger high schools that ranged in degrees of emotional and academic setbacks. Although the achievement gap between Hispanic and mainstream White middle-class students remained troubling to many educators, the outcome for Hispanics also remained the same: They were "more likely to be placed in remedial general education tracks and more often [to be] incorrectly assessed as being mentally retarded or learning disabled" (Fletcher & Navarette, 2003, p. 38).

In Case 15, in a number of smaller high schools with a high percentage of Latino students tended to be older because the students were either held back a grade, in some instances students were held back more than once or students transferred from another country that tested lower than students of their same age. Generally, older Latino students transferred from larger high schools to alternative high schools and smaller high schools to complete their high school requirements. Normally, Latino students came with personal and academic issues and were several years behind grade level. Therefore, it was essential for teachers to be trained in working with Latino students, understanding

their learning abilities and their home culture. Teachers performed more effectively with small classes of approximately 20 or fewer students in addressing the potential challenges they faced and in implementing alternative strategies to build effective interaction between student and teacher. In focusing on Latino student weaknesses in academic settings, teachers directed their attention to flexible approaches in order to invite participation in understanding cultural differences in learning and to create new learning processes to achieve higher expectations.

The staff of this small continuation high school encouraged Latino students to feel connected to the school culture. Students were older; some of the students already had babies, which increased their difficulty in attending high school during the day. In dealing with the problem, the high school administration created a free daycare center at the school to allow Latino mothers to attend high school. This was based on the idea that by obtaining their high school diplomas, these students would have increased possibilities of earning better wages after high school and could train for better opportunities. While the high school leadership and teaching staff worked diligently, paraprofessionals assisted teachers in instruction in areas in which students had difficulty grasping the classroom assignments. With that increased help, Latino students acquired a stronger base in academic learning. Teachers and paraprofessionals personal attention, patience, caring attitudes, and instruction that met student needs received the positive response of students becoming more familiar with the subject matter. This flexibility in methods to target student weaknesses and collaborative efforts between teachers and paraprofessionals resulted in softening student attitudes and giving them better memories than the ones of failing, little hope of succeeding, rejection of their ethnicity, and inability

to keep pace with students who performed at full performance. In their ongoing active pursuit of building students self-esteem, the principal and teaching staff recognized that the longer students were exposed to the high school culture, the greater their rewards in terms of student academic achievement.

Alternative high schools are not typically the structures in which most of the students receive their high school education. However, for Latino students, such schools have become more the rule than the exception. In either comprehensive or alternative high schools, paraprofessionals abilities to supplement the teachers instruction has resulted in a sense of discovery for Latino students that reflects experiences of what can be done if efforts are placed on students strengths and weaknesses.

In Case 5, high schools made great strides in API scores, especially for Latino students who made significant gains in comparison to non-Latino students. One high school used instructional coaches to refine the criteria of existing programs to aid teachers in improving teaching strategies. In another high school, within an 8-year period, the API scores among Latino students increased significantly in comparison with those of Anglo American students. In this high school, the administration and teaching staff united their efforts and worked as a team to place students in appropriate classes according to student entry scores. Teachers adjusted instruction and time to work with students who required additional attention to improve their low scores. In addition, teachers set aside time to work with other teachers to share student data and to receive extensive support in scaffolding instructional strategies to improve student API growth.

The transparency of the high school goal to take whatever means necessary to increase API to a certain level was evident. In a high school with a majority of Latino

students, the teaching staff shared an interest in supporting Latino student achievement. Data suggested teachers' authentic interest in building effective curricula did not result in immediate gratification. However, efforts to enrich instruction through collaboration in assessing student data and understanding Latino students academic concerns rather than maintaining existing teaching strategies that fail were a few of the approaches that indicated growing interest in Latino student learning. The math department team set aside collaborative time to meet at least twelve times throughout the year to problem solve, assess student test results and explore the best practices that performed well on certain course material. As one of the teachers expressed "the collaboration with the department chair and my colleagues is far more valuable than any other professional development I have received" (case 3). The openness of the collaboration and department chair's leadership, the teachers strongly agreed collaboration time created the key to increase student academic achievement in math.

Impact of higher value traits to high school culture. Despite the injustice that marks the history of the Mexican people and the social capital influenced by domineering forces, Mexicans have continued to hold strong family values and to create collective community environments (Kanellos, 1993). In attempting to change a high school culture to shared values, one must make a decisive break from the praxis of traditional views. Promoting strategies to increase students' hunger for improvement, raising the bar to focus on greater expectations, promoting excellence, putting students first—all these components were considered added values in a school culture (Fullan, 2005).

Case 14 concerned a high school in which Latinos comprised 95.7% of the student population; most of the Latino students were below grade level. The school

culture had to be changed if the goal of improving test scores was to be attained. To aim at higher expectations, the school administration changed the master schedule from a semester to a trimester organizational plan. This concrete action of system change initiated by high school leadership affected the number of class periods, the length of class sessions, and the teacher's instructional processes. The consequences of the change to the trimester session included more time for teachers to collaborate with their colleagues concerning course content rather than maintaining standard course material, longer class periods, and increasing students focus on building their skills and knowledge at a quicker pace. From this show of leadership, the mathematics department chairperson created a program named ALPHA, through which simple processes were introduced to pinpoint student weaknesses; teachers then followed with effective instruction to help students improve those areas. The overall advantage in changing to trimester sessions was that teacher's improved instructional processes through collaboration with their peers, became more aware of students cultural identities, and promoted a more balanced learning environment in which strong leadership was sustained.

Leadership in making student needs come first was the foundation for developing an understanding of cultural patterns in student learning and insights in relating to Latino students. In Case 19, the changes made in the mathematics department were connected to state regulation requirements. Because of the power of the regulations, the mathematics department chairperson set new goals and a direction for the department distributing responsibilities within the department. Thus, leadership at different levels resulted in Latino students outperforming statewide test scores, in ELs and majority Latino students outperforming their peers in statewide test scores, and in Latino students outperforming

district and state average test scores and Asian students average test scores at their high school. They still needed more development to meet Asian students state average state scores.

The learning environment was built on extensive afterschool and weekend sessions through which students were encouraged to work harder with teachers who showed a caring attitude in bringing students to full performance. The department chairperson supported the commitment of teachers who were passionate about doing whatever was necessary to meet student needs. This vision of learning involved mentoring new mathematics teachers, investing time to understand student data better, classroom observations, and awards for student accomplishments. With this collective, assertive movement towards student achievement, the department faced challenges by working with reduced funding. Teachers were forced to use their own sources of income to purchase supplies and materials to continue their activities and to stage award ceremonies to create personal fulfillment for student's accomplishments. Instead of returning to the past practices and environment, these teachers passion and commitment resulted in the continuation of their model and subsequent upward trends in Latino students test scores.

The data suggested limited funds attached to improved learning and controlling interests affecting student accomplishments may oppress student progress unless teachers are willing to sacrifice a small price for greater rewards by placing students first. The data also reflected the recognition of student's learning abilities in the teachers and the leadership of the mathematics department giving students personal attention through additional sessions and awarding accomplishments to reflect progress. However, if

reduction in funding persists, teachers may be vulnerable in pursuing activities outside traditional instruction.

Impact of in-school programs. Hispanic students have always done less well on standardized tests than White, middle-class students (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2005). Many educators, looking at the unmovable gap, have argued that the tests must be implicitly discriminatory and that such built-in, almost unacknowledged discrimination has "far-reaching consequences for Hispanic and other students of ethnic minority heritage" (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2005, p. 4). In Case 17, teachers and students felt comfortable in the clean, safe campus of this high school with its added attention to school ground décor; thus, their surroundings portrayed a school culture of balance and growth.

The principal and teachers showed the same kind of consideration to student learning. The administration created a master schedule with three main programs: PASS, mentorship, and guided study. Each program was diverse in its purpose in serving the Latino student population (81% of the school population) to engage in academic achievement. PASS was developed to help students who were failing and who required additional tutoring to pass core courses. The guided study program was for students who failed core courses in eighth grade and were required to repeat similar courses in ninth grade to bring them to full performance. The master schedule was flexible enough to include a mentorship program through which students worked on an interim basis in local businesses to get exposure and experience in the business environment. Program processes were designed collectively to guide students to be more engaged in developing their skills, which positively affected student's confidence and self-identity. Teachers

personalized instruction, acknowledging students ethnicity while employing processes and practices linked to students positive attitudes in applying instruction.

The data suggested that programs connected to student learning apart from the traditional master schedule of fixed schedules could result in changing student-learning habits in effective ways to develop student abilities to learn at full performance. In addition, clean, safe campus environments and classrooms given the same attention result in climates in which students can fulfill their learning experiences for the better.

Case 20 concerned a high school in which 95% of the student population was Latino, 60% of the students were ELs, and 27% of the teaching staff of Latino teachers who had formerly been in high school under improvement programs. The high school underwent a change because of the leadership of the superintendent. High school policies and standards concerning dress codes, school attendance, and programs to improve student achievement were affected. However, because of their experience in traditional linear thinking (either/or), teachers lacked the appropriate skills and methods to bring students to full performance, especially students who entered high school testing several years behind grade level.

Data reflected the teachers shifting of responsibility to the students, an approach that seems to be outside the normal processes of the school but works in teachers favor. The criterion of one language, that of the dominant group, results in centering their "own beliefs, attitudes and values, over and above those of other groups . . . [accounts for a tendency to create] obstacle [s] to effective leadership" (Northouse, 2007, p. 303) and to understanding and respecting the cultures of others.

Previously discussed in the literature review in chapter 2, Graglia, the Texas law professor and critic of affirmative action,

> told students in [his] class: 'Blacks and Mexican-Americans are not academically competitive with whites in selective institutions. It is the result primarily of cultural effects. They have a culture that seems not to encourage achievement. Failure is not looked upon with disgrace.' (as quoted in Garcia, 2007, para. 13)

This message from a well-educated professor (Graglia) and teachers with similar sentiments who distance themselves from the culture of Latino students is an indication of the narrow-mindedness, communicated consciously or unconsciously, that narrows the vision in mainstream classrooms, becoming a barrier for Latino students to connect effectively with their teachers and impeding their progress toward improved academic achievement. The absence of teacher knowledge, separated rather than cultivated in common interest, is counterproductive and cannot be sustained if relationships are to be built between teachers and students.

Also noted in Case 20, because of the past poor performance of this high school, the principal led in developing programs to correspond to the higher expectations for all students and supported a culture wherein teachers played an active role in nurturing student learning. However, the high school leadership failed to provide teaching staff with adequate training relevant to diverse learners. Programs put in place requiring rigorous implementation received some resistance to the methods; and some teachers, impatient with students learning abilities and frustrated by student achievement, concluded students were lazy and did not try to learn. Because of this misunderstanding of Latino student's capabilities, teacher's frustration increased and test scores improved

only minimally. Teachers unskilled in diverse learning shifted the responsibility to students to find ways to improve their own learning with teacher support.

The data reflected that the superintendent and principal advocated changes to the high school because of the poor performance of the school. The transforming changes in school policies and practices without the evaluation of teachers experiences related to Latino student achievement indicated disregard for the value of appropriate training and experience in cultural sensitivity pedagogy. Teachers repeatedly interpreted behaviors validated in Hispanic students homes or out-of-school environments mistakenly in terms of the teacher expectations of classroom behavior (Aroe & Nelson, 2000). One might argue cultural differences and deficits could be a "more complex situation as the student . . . possesses poor self-esteem, decreased motivation, . . . and little interest in school with resulting problems of academic underachievement" (Fletcher & Navarette, 2003, p. 42) masking Hispanic students cultural identity that might have brought with them to the classroom.

In further discussions in Case 20, students taking responsibility resulted in changing the tide in improving student achievement. The principal and teachers developed a framework that included adult tutors, afterschool facilities, and course materials to aid students to work collaboratively with their peers in activities to improve learning. Senior high school students started an afterschool study group with students at lower grade levels with the aid of adult supervision. Results of the afterschool sessions indicated their efforts made a difference in average test scores. The student's ingenuity and leadership were contributing factors for students who had previously tested at second or third grade reading levels advancing several grades from the time they entered high

school improving. Teacher's encouragement and raised higher expectations for their students, in short period of time, students accomplishments improved in reducing the learning gap to near full grade performance. Even though students did not meet grade level, the principal and teaching staff viewed their progress as significant and they were encouraged to continue with the alternative programs.

The apparent deficits of cultural and social capital culminate in the classroom. There, mismatches often exist between the teacher's style, dictated by the institution, and the learning styles the students bring with them into the classroom (Cruz & Walker, 2001). Often teachers are involved in teaching rather than in assessing whether "their values might reflect prejudices or even racism toward certain groups. When teachers [viewed and admitted] . . . such biases, they help[ed] to create an atmosphere of trust and acceptance for students" (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006, p. 5). Failure to understand or acknowledge Latino students views of learning and when their contributions are undervalued, the outcomes have resulted in insurmountable consequences in social capital.

In Case 21, the high school population was 88% Latino. Of the total enrollment of 2,523 students, 278 were ELs. High school programs Puente and AVID were effective for Latino students, especially when applied routinely in classroom instruction. These programs positively affected student's confidence and self-identity. In-house programs were created called Capturing Kids Hearts (CKH). The CKH programs consisted of techniques to make students feel welcome inside the classroom and Secondary Academic Language Tools (SALT) that were used for reading. In SALT, students learned to

identify vocabulary, to do concept mapping, and to apply other strategies for reading that resulted in immediate rewards.

The informal style of CKH was aligned with the Latino student cultural trait of informal learning. The simple gesture of the teacher welcoming a student with a handshake at the door when the student entered the classroom resulted in immediate changes in student attitudes, evidenced through body language and facial expressions (i.e., slight smiles). Teacher collaboration, infused with other methods, social contracts, and Cornell note taking, resulted in increasing students responsibility and improving test scores. Social contracts made a difference in student responsibility and in respect for authority. Students set the terms; the teacher set the conditions if the contract was broken. As a result if a student was noncompliant with the contract, the student was reassigned temporarily to another classroom and more often than not, the student remained in compliance with the contract because the alternative was much more displeasing to the student.

Teachers who practice informed concepts of human activity in their classrooms collectively reinforce the social skills involved in responsibility, potentially creating a strong framework modeled after the themes of cultural identity, caring, and higher expectations. A strong area of research in support of culturally responsive pedagogy is the “funds of knowledge” approach. This approach to the skills of diverse students serves to bridge the division between home and school culture through viewing the home culture not as a deficit to be overcome (as is too often the case even in the social capital perspective of critical theory) but as a fund of knowledge to be built upon (Casanova, 2003, p. 15).

In Case 21, teachers faced the challenges of large class sizes, students who were behind grade level, and students with emotional issues resulting from past school experiences. Teachers employed approaches to pinpoint student weaknesses to deal with the issues that were interfering with student's abilities to progress and succeed. Teachers introduced Cornell note taking to help students understand material better, to reinforce key areas, and to help students prepare for tests. Ultimately, more than simple handshakes and Cornell note taking were required to address the effects of some students backgrounds to increase academic learning and improve test scores. However, teachers were committed to finding creative ways to strengthening student skills.

A primary way in which funds of knowledge is carried out has been teachers acknowledging the value of the students home culture and allowing students to bring elements of that culture into the classroom context. That is, "instead of treating students home cultures, native languages, and ways of thinking and communicating as obstacles to learning or problems to be solved, teachers should capitalize on students home culture while explicitly teaching the mainstream culture" (Casanova, 2003, p. 16).

In addition, in Case 21, small class sizes were offered to enable students to receive special attention to strengthen their learning abilities. Classroom décor included posters of the school vision, phrases to remind students to reflect on college requirements, copies of social contracts signed by the students, and student work. Posters of specific themes associated with subject matter and an array of helpful hints for taking tests were placed strategically around the classroom.

In terms of teaching style, the teachers injected a sense of humor, warmed students up on sets of problems, reviewed the material, and then instructed students to

form into small groups. Groups of no more than four individuals were preferable to keep the size manageable for teachers in checking student understanding of the material. Upon completion of their assignments, the groups went to the front of the room to check their answers.

High expectations were practiced at all levels of learning. To bring mathematics students to full performance, students below grade level were required to enroll in Algebra I. Because of the large class size and the desire to ensure students did not fall behind, the teacher matched students with other students who understood the material to assist in explaining it. In all, the high school leadership and teaching staff found ways through professional training modules, creative thinking in the development of alternative programs, and student assessment data to connect to student needs and to employ practices to support improved student learning.

The implications of overlooking the value of Latino student contributions include sustaining the dominant style of the elite and to "banking concepts to encourage passivity in the oppressed" (Freire, 2004, p. 95), meaning filling non-dominant students minds with encouragement of passivity, consciously "characterized [as] indifference toward instructional quality" (Weisberg et al., 2009, p. 24) and alignment with similar cultural dimensions. In promoting ethnic and cultural equality, teacher attitudes and cultural sensitivity in "understanding of, and accommodation for, diverse cultures . . . [are] qualities" (Tan, 2002, p. 23) that result in Latino students attaching and feeling connected with teachers.

Theme 2: Caring

Relationship between student and teacher. Teacher–student relationships are challenging enough without differences in cultural backgrounds. Adults and children (teachers and students) from different cultural backgrounds use a form of communication that may be complicated to understand. They may be at odds with each other because "whenever a message produced in one culture must be processed in another culture . . . languages and nonverbal differences may make communication difficult" (Lulofs & Cahn, 2000, p. 40). The exposure of increasingly diverse student populations to the assimilation influences of Anglo American culture in educational settings clearly has resulted in the failure of Latino students in Grades 9–12. For instance, reported statistics for Hispanic performance in formal education, or "institutionalized learning" (Hall, 1989, p. 190), in established educational systems revealed a dropout rate of 21.4% compared with a rate of 5.3% for Anglo Americans and an 8.4% rate for African Americans (NCES, 2007). Working in this system with the same traditional views, teachers have found it more difficult to integrate curriculum and introduce methods more compatible with meeting Latino student needs. School cultures in which the Latino culture is integrated reflect a form of caring in a personal way that suggests willingness to develop strategies related to Latino student's growth.

According to the description of Case 15, continuation high schools were designed to host small student populations of slightly older students with more difficult past experiences and behavioral issues. Teachers were assigned small class sizes to provide environments of personal attention so that teachers could help students feel connected to improve their academic learning and build their skills toward earning their high school

diplomas. Overtime, students exposed to friendly classroom environments with teachers who were sensitive to their issues and who exercised patience with them felt more comfortable in asking teachers questions. As a result of teachers being patient in responding to students questions, Latino students became more engaged in learning and were better prepared to pass their courses.

Data suggested that teachers perform successfully with smaller class sizes, which is a contributing factor in effective learning strategies in areas in which students feel they can learn and achieve higher goals. Teachers' sense of caring revealing sincere connectedness to student issues at the same time they encourage students to engage in learning results in students accruing more positive influences in the academic setting, allowing them to be surrounded in more hopeful environments.

In Case 7, at-risk Latino students entered the alternative high school below grade level, which was a challenge to teachers to get students to grade level. Student personal issues, habits of class unpreparedness, and absenteeism, combined with limited funding resulted in stretching teachers to find strategies to meet student needs. Teachers collaborated to find holistic approaches to bring together students cultural identity and their desire to change to a positive outlook concerning their academic learning. The high school administration scheduled smaller classes to enhance closer relationships and connectedness between teachers and students. The idea was that, in time, the rigorous curriculum and holistic approaches would result in reversing the students poor learning habits. Students would be challenged to build their knowledge and to develop a foundation of self-confidence and a desire for higher expectations. Because of the small class sizes and teachers caring attitudes, student attitudes and learning habits gradually

changed, resulting in improved behavior and greater academic learning. The longer students were exposed to this holistic style of education, the closer the relationships became between teachers and students and the more students learned new experiences.

In case 18, high school's campus was clean, secure and family-like environment. Alternative programs source of funds were provided through a grant that made available career programs in nursing assistant, food safety, and automotive mechanics. Though teachers agreed the student learning in their chosen career program, and senior project of accumulation of learning from previous school years was the foundation of their self-confidence, positive attitude, and respect of self-identity, the type of course content redirected student's attention away from advance core courses. Teachers who supplemented methods with patience and flexibility created environments in which students felt confident. When students felt a sense of fairness in their classrooms and a safe campus environment, Latino students identified with closer relationships indicative of academic growth.

Valenzuela (1999) concluded "caring pedagogy considers the strengths that youth brings with them to school alongside [past school experiences and behavior issues] that [may] disrupt what would otherwise be a more natural development of those strengths" (p. 115). Smaller classes are part of the natural process in informal patterns of Latino student learning.

Effect of Latino students on higher expectations. Teachers who view Latino students' lack of accomplishments in meeting full performance as not caring about school restrict their understanding of the social and cultural aspects of Latino students. Although the teacher's role is to teach, without knowledge of how students experience learning and

the energy to be more involved in student development, the teaching results in few rewards (Brookfield, 1995; Zwiers, 2008). Teachers who lack the proper training or skills to connect learning effectively to Latino students make it more difficult for the students to meet full performance.

In Case 20, a small high school showed a different course of action in relationship to the diversity associated with Latino students. This high school, located in a small community, responded with mixed feelings concerning the increased numbers of Latinos in the student population. The community and the high school were not quite engaged in connecting with the Latino community, but the high school staff provided afterschool and tutorial sessions to bring under performers to full performance. For Latino students who failed advanced mathematics courses, teachers developed support systems to intervene when students required additional instruction to strengthen their weak areas. Some students enrolled in AP courses passed, but others failed. Even though some failed these classes, students who were behind grade level experienced a level of higher expectations and received increased opportunities to be integrated into AP courses.

Results of student failure in a course can frustrate or discourage Latino students again. However, the data reflected that the Latino student experiences helped them to acquire higher levels of learning and a deeper sense of higher expectations. Obviously, passing or failing affects test scores, but the meanings connected to the experiences must not be overlooked.

In case 16, the Science and Music teachers who were part of the research revealed different views. The science teacher viewed magnet students as not lazy and they competed for each point to get a better score. The music teacher viewed Latino students

were treated differently in standards and in the school's culture. A caring attitude was often displayed by more preferential treatment in magnet programs and elusive attitude towards the Latino community and their culture. Given the important high-context cultural influence related to the Latino student's home culture, and confrontational to low-context communication built on linear thinking, the conflict can escalate because it is more likely teacher's pay more attention to the subject matter resulting in increasing the uncaring and unfriendliness of the high school climate. In such a climate, the researcher corroborated with the music teacher's views that Latino students were treated different than non-Latino students were treated with higher expectations. And, the views of the high school's administration and teacher survey results indicated all students were treated the same.

In the frameworks of U.S. institutions, the role of historical assimilation has often been emphasized through aspects of the dominating culture and the identification of ethnic minorities, thus projecting a clear message that one must follow the American way to succeed (Valenzuela, 1999). This normalcy draws cultural messages that maybe unaware on its affects on cultures that are outside of their vision. Cultures are embedded in different ways of framing conflict across cultural lines. Just as there is not exact science on what constitutes conflict and ways to come to a straight forward decision, one who appreciates the "importance of interest that all minds [do not think] in the same way because they happen to have the same teacher and textbook (Dewey, 1944, p. 130) reveals a sense of openness in caring in relationship to a student's of other ways in communication and learning.

Theme 3: Culturally Responsive Teaching/Pedagogy

According to Hall (1990), "culture reflects the way one learns, since culture is 'learned and shared behavior.'. . . [that] educators might have a better grasp . . . [if they] study the acquired context in which other people learn" (p. 47). Connectedness to culture can be emphasized in either the collective (group) or the individual. Persons from collectivist cultures perform better when working in a group setting and when performing interdependent tasks. In contrast, persons from individualist cultures focus on themselves, viewing time "as an adversary in the sense that group interactions are a temporary means" (Stanton, 2000, p. 2). In the Hispanic culture, language is verbal and nonverbal, inclusive of Mexican heritage, and runs deep from strong family ties, collectively oriented to community life. Hispanics prefer to talk around an issue and are more at ease in informal environments (Espinosa, 1995). These traits operate in high-context cultures (Hall, 1989; Wurtz, 2005). Low-context cultures are the reverse of high-context cultures in terms of style and flexibility. They are individualistic instead of collectivistic and task oriented to meet deadlines rapidly in place of stability (Avruch, 2000; Hall, 1989).

Cultural identity connected to course content and beyond. Anglo American domination has continued in its vague characterization of the historical value of Mexican Americans and their culture in American history (González & Fernández, 1994). The domination and super power status of the United States can be seen in historical documents. According to Peterson (2000), early in the history of the United States, "Americans believed that they had a divine right to spread their culture and democratic institutions over the North American continent" (p. 20). However, important events during the late 1800s and the first part of the 1900s that included the lynching and murder

of Mexican Americans in California and other parts of the Southwest have been considered inconsequential in American literature. Vigilantism reflected the law of the land and Anglo American perceptions of moral value (Gonzales-Day, 2006; Kanellos, 1993). The limited number of high school courses on Mexican or Latino culture to validate their historical importance in American history has continued to show a gross lack of commitment to providing Mexican or Latino perspectives in education.

In Case 1, a teacher with passion and perseverance received approval to offer a course in Chicano studies, although with some reluctance from the school administration and other faculty members. Because of the teacher's strong Mexican heritage, he drew from his own personal experiences from Mexico and the United States in teaching the curriculum on Mexican and Latin American history. The culture in the Chicano studies classroom was created to connect with students inside and outside the classroom, which encouraged students to reclaim their culture and language in academic settings.

The course on Chicano studies suggested that Latino students who enroll in the course can transform their present educational experiences and feel more empowered to pursue higher goals. Because of a number of obstacles that arise between teacher and student, Latino children perceive history differently than their Anglo American teachers. In-depth learning of another perspective comes with an understanding of that individual's history but is challenged by "tendencies to perceive life as . . . experienced" (Zwiers, 2008, p. 83). U.S. history curricula has been inundated with "Eurocentric places, government systems . . . culture . . . concepts, such as individualism, democracy, . . . [that] might be less emphasized in student's home cultures" (Zwiers, p. 84). When a topic is emphasized in only one direction, students from diverse backgrounds "feel

uncomfortable expressing [his or her] opinions during the classroom discussions" (Zwiers, 2008, p. 85).

In Case 4, in a high school with a student population that was 97% Latino, teachers interested in teaching drama received resistance from the school administrators and other faculty members. However, through persistence, the teachers received approval to offer the drama courses. They were challenged, however, because of limited available materials and funding. Thus, they developed creative ways to find materials and to stimulate the interest of the students. The drama room contained an old stage stable enough to hold student rehearsals. The room was spacious and contained a few round tables and chairs that students could arrange as they saw fit to be comfortable. On the bookshelf were two textbooks, containing a total of 457 pages, in which only *one paragraph* was dedicated to Latino theatre. Only Latino students were enrolled in the drama course.

As the Latino student population increases, the need for culturally sensitive programs also increases. Full awareness, however, must be more than an "add-on; that is, . . . one or two courses for [a] particular professional specialty" (Sanchez, 1995, p. 1). Teachers associated with programs or training for diverse learners should integrate "issues of awareness of biases and stereotypes, and the selection of appropriate testing. . . These measures [could enhance] more relevant and culturally sensitive assessments" (Sanchez, 1995, p. 3).

In Case 4, teachers sought materials and sources of literature to help students connect with their heritage. In keeping with student's history and culture, teachers instructed students to create their own vignettes that had personal meaning to them.

Students, no longer confined to their desks as they were in other classrooms, worked in teams organized in different areas of the classroom. The drama teachers circulated among the different groups, which generated active learning. Within the curriculum, teachers integrated rigorous creative writing in two languages, Spanish and English, and oral communication. Initially, students were fearful, indicated through their silence and resistance to speaking on stage.

High-context communication occurs in the context of relationships, allowing a great deal of indirectness in the communication. In high-context situations, the interlocutor says things indirectly but expects the listener to understand (Salleh, 2005). High-context communication is more emotional and is involved in close relationships than rational and linear communication (Salleh, 2005).

In Case 4, students gained confidence through teacher encouragement to overcome their embarrassment in speaking in front of a group. They practiced reading and writing and communicating in both languages. These exercises were manifested in rigorous writing, reading, and self-expression. Students were transformed, exhibiting more self-confidence, significant improvement in reading comprehension, oral and writing communication that fostered engagement with their peers, and teamwork in writing meaningful dialogue in fluent English and Spanish.

By promoting academic achievement outside traditional teaching, teachers engaged the need for "a culturally sensitive curriculum . . . [and a sense] that all students feel included" (Valenzuela, 1999, p.100). Therefore, in Case 4, the teachers, through their holistic teaching styles, helped students feel more comfortable in their accomplishments. Students devoted their time and energy to working harder to increase their abilities in

acting out their roles on stage. By the end of the course, students were more self-confident in their cultural identity and were willing to increase their energy in other courses.

The data suggested that teachers who enrich the classroom instruction with culturally sensitive curriculum reinforced the connection between teacher and student. Courses in which the Latino culture is articulated constituted recognition of the student's background, confirming that the student culture and academic achievement can work together. However, for teachers, the problem has continued to be finding "what conditions must be present so that pupils will make the responses which cannot help having learning as their consequence" (Dworkin, 1959, p. 125). Teaching with nontraditional approaches may result in fostering the value of the student culture without sacrificing or impeding their growth in other courses. One can argue that learning one's own culture and history should be the purview of the home (Chavez, 1991); but, if educators put the value of cultural context into practice, making major changes in the classroom, Mexican students could be inspired through such major changes.

The effect of culture on achievement. In cultural contexts focused on connecting teachers and students, sociocultural theory is more amenable to students from collectivist cultures (Kozulin et al., 2003). By creating a community of learning in the classroom, any teacher can make the classroom more appealing to students from collective, high-context cultures.

In Case 3, the high school student population was 84% Latino. Because this school was not completely prepared to handle a large number of students below full-performance level, an accurate identification of the exact number of Latino students

below grade level was not possible. However, the numbers were high enough to challenge teachers to be flexible in their curriculum to meet the needs of Latino students in order to bring them to full performance. In the mathematics department, the department chairperson developed a curriculum related to Latino student learning ability, changing the teaching style from linear to collaborative. Changes involved teacher training in sharing student data and insights on ways to improve Latino students test scores with the aid of mathematics coaches. The coaches responsibilities involved observing classroom instruction and providing useful information concerning teaching practices to help teachers develop relevant curriculum to meet the needs of Latino students.

Because of limited funding, in the collaborative student assessment between teachers and coaches, teachers were mindful to find inexpensive aids, such as whiteboards and alternative methods to keep the students alert and to cultivate student interest. Whiteboards, a less expensive instrument, have worked well in presenting instant results of student understanding of the daily activities. Teachers had immediate views of student answers, instant results for the teacher to use to assist students in seeking the correct answer and to help the students understand the material better. Because of this simple method of connecting with student learning, Latino students became more engaged and interactive in classroom participation.

The data reflected collaborative efforts by teaching staff to meet the needs of Latino students. By changing from linear to collaborative processes, teachers work in a cohesive unit to override past ineffective instruction and move in a more helpful direction in which they carefully examine the present conditions and identify the importance of

personal attention in more meaningful ways. Thus, Latino students are more apt to attach to the meaning of the teacher's instruction. In this framework, a teacher can assist the student through "questioning, modeling, feedback, contingency management, cognitive structuring, task structuring and instructing" (Mono & Rueda, 2003, p. 439). This approach can be effective if the teacher has some knowledge of what the students already know and takes the time to understand the student's background as well.

In Case 2, openness in the drama classroom helped students feel comfortable in a place where students congregated to interact with their peers to discuss assigned projects. Through the classroom social setting, students worked together to discuss open items left from the last meeting and future events. Through the drama teacher's holistic style of teaching, students engaged and became more empowered, taking on responsibility in projects to the very end. Latino students learned the processes for conducting meetings, which consisted of the leader calling the meeting to order, the reading of the minutes from the previous meeting, and continuing the meeting in an orderly fashion. If any impasse occurred, the teacher intervened to aid the process but left total responsibility to students until they completed the task. Because of the nature of these exercises, their responsibility, and high expectations, students felt empowered and enriched in organizing fundraisers and reflected positive attitudes toward their contributions. They were doing something that reaped benefits for both them and others.

Student accomplishments through the arts have transformed the methods of learning into more informal environments. Latino culture is thoroughly imbued with *familismo*: one is always relating to others, thinking of others, and acknowledging one's interdependence on others. Thus, things are not always explicitly said (Altschuler &

Schmautz, 2005). Through combining home culture and academic learning, teachers and Latino students can relate to each other, thus allowing these students to see that culture and academia can work together.

Effects of established programs for Latino students. Many attempts have been made to introduce multicultural education of various kinds into classrooms with few, if any, gains in student achievement (Mullan, 2002). The failure of these multicultural or bilingual programs revealed that "fluency in any language except English interferes with education, or at least does not contribute to education in any meaningful way" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. xv). Two established statewide programs outside of bilingual programs have often been applied to Latino students: AVID and Puente. These programs were created for Latino and other minority students who have the desire to go to college and are willing to meet the demands of the program to succeed in a global society.

In Case 13, a high-performing high school recognized as a National Demonstration School in meeting AVID requirements was part of the rigorous program that affected Latino students, which constituted 97.7% of the student population. The high school philosophy and policy endorsed by the principal was that all teachers should encourage students at below and full performance to enroll in AP courses to stimulate students interests in reaching higher goals. The AVID coordinator, who encouraged the policy, had conflict with the non-AVID teachers who taught the AP courses. AP teachers who disagreed with the school policy argued that enrollment of AVID students in AP classes should not be allowed and that teachers should not be expected to change the curriculum or teaching instruction for those who do not meet the standard requirements for taking the course. Non-AVID teachers who opposed the policy withdrew from

teaching AP courses or relocated to other schools. However, because of the high school administration's persistence in AP course enrollment, Latino students embraced the higher level of learning, which allowed them to become college eligible. Thus, taking the AP courses resulted in Latino students' growth in mastering the skills to raise their test scores and to progress closer to full performance or above it.

Data suggested that students taking AP courses in a rigorous curriculum of active student involvement is a means of improving academic achievement that affects Latino students positively. When these students receive failing grades in college preparation courses, their enrollment may be seen as an experiment that resulted in wasting and resources rather than as means to initiate advancement. Such an attitude reflects the narrowing of the value of diversity and is a "segregate[d view of] educational values due to the isolation from one another" (Dewey, 1966, p. 244) in terms of cultural differences.

Puente was originally focused on addressing low academic achievement rates of Mexican American or Latino students through bridging the concept of *familia* with instruction in reading and writing, academic counseling, and mentoring. Since its inception and success, the program has been extended to other minority groups. In Case 11, the Puente trainer encouraged teachers to think critically about the ways students might interpret or deal with new information presented in the classroom. Professional development sessions on collaboration, empowerment, and cultural sensitivity were used to reinforce the meaning of "walking in someone's shoes" (the students) to understand the disempowerment students might feel. Teachers were challenged not to perceive students difficulties in learning the material as not wanting to learn. Novice Puente teachers transferred their new knowledge to their classrooms through trial and error

employing exercises modeled after the Puente program. These teachers newness to learning about their subjects as modeled in the Puente program was reflected in their awkwardness and uneasiness in applying the exercises they had learned through professional development. Novice Puente teachers encountered challenges in recognizing the importance of the underlying the connection between students culture and rigorous reading and writing assignments to build a relationship between teacher and student to improve academic achievement. As a result, the exercises intended to show students how to reflect on what they wrote to gain a better understanding of the meaning behind the words instead were interpreted as writing exercises in structure rather than in expression.

Multiculturalism, including interest in more than one culture outside the mainstream culture, has been a challenge for the "majority of teacher candidates, teachers, and administrators" (Attinasi, 1994, p. 1). In reality, Latino students are involved with two different cultures, family and country; but when they walk into the classroom, "the linguistic and cultural resources that bilingual children bring are suppressed and at best ignored" (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999, p. 427).

In Case 11, the seasoned Puente teacher who taught AP courses was better equipped to contribute to exercises modeled after the Puente program. The teacher could connect students history through activities advocated in the Puente program. The exercises included students reading Latino poetry which was used to give students ideas of how to express, in writing, their own experiences. Teachers, novice and seasoned, integrated and implemented Latino historical culture into their curriculum and as part of the classroom discussion to encourage open communication and to build better relationships between teacher and student toward improved academic achievement.

In another study discussed in the literature review, Latino teachers identified with Latino students based on their own personal experiences in language, assimilation, and the devaluation of their culture (Weisman & Hanson, 2008). They were able to raise awareness through material and cultural resources that reflected the mainstream culture. However, in the same study, the teachers voiced little concern for "forces that contribute[d] to inequity, and none voiced the need to challenge traditional views and practices that work[ed] to the detriment of Latino students" (Weisman & Hanson, 2008, p. 667), showing that Latinos were the ones being oppressed (Freire, 2004).

The silent culture in the academic setting. The fear or failure to acknowledge culture metaphorically sees humans with eyes partially closed in and with a view of uncertainty (Freire, 2004). This limited or biased understanding results in a classroom climate focused primarily on a dominant subgroup. The solution is not a reversal in thinking to resemble the oppressor but the recognition must engage in self-discovery, beginning with trusting in their self-identity (Freire, 2004). Latino ethnicity presence has been challenged in society and in the educational system. To attempt to balance the scale, alternative programs have been used to reinforce the cultural relationship between Latino students and academic achievement processes more compatible to Latino student learning. However, alternative programs in most cases get implemented as a last resort. These programs and practices changed Latino students thinking to focus on developing goals in ways that helped them to improve their learning, as discussed in the following cases.

In Case 8, Latino students comprised 91% of the high school student population. The school was focused on project-based programs and program certifications. Through a

state-of-the-art technology program, students were encouraged to interact with their peers to problem solve technical issues, participate in rigorous writing assignments, and complete projects to develop creative thinking. Teachers filled student activities with projects that required translation and research in Spanish and English, the development of PowerPoint presentations, and other assignments to expand their knowledge in technology. In small classes, collaboration and interaction were instilled in the environment, with teachers working closely with their students.

This data reflected that student engagement in career-oriented programs was restricted to the conditions set forth. Although Latino students benefited from certificates that facilitated the ability to earn higher wages and they benefited from using technology to express themselves in two languages, the connection with their ethnic identity was shifted from their cultural identity to modified conditions of enculturation. This path of teacher education and mainstream society influences was constructed on the perception that some groups are better because of what they receive rather than because of the importance of their cultural identity. Latino students, who are outside the mainstream culture, have "often experience[d] schooling conditions that inhibit rather than promote their educational success history" (Weisman et al., 2007, p. 193).

Case 12 covered three generations. In the three generations, Latino students identified with their cultural identity and had a strong sense of duty concerning their families. However, the third generation showed more conflict and separation from their ethnic identity and in their goals for their futures. Females were more engaged in afterschool activities and expressed more self-confidence in their self-identities. The second-generation Latino students performed better on state exit examinations and were

more involved in school activities, which was a contributing factor in their improved academic achievement.

Although some individuals may argue that Hispanics represent a voluntary immigrant group and thus should not exhibit an oppositional stance to mainstream education, alienation among Mexican Americans has apparently reached a point where, perhaps modeling African-American youth, they also term doing well in school as "doing the Anglo thing" (Altschuler & Schmautz, 2005, p. 5). As the generations become more acculturated into the U.S. mainstream, Latino attitudes become less supportive of indigenous cultural issues (Branton, 2007), and Latino student populations are subjected to more ready-made curricula.

In Case 9, a high-achieving high school in which Latino students constituted 93.9% of the student population experienced an increase in school morale. The principal initiated a student survey to identify more clearly the relationship of the students in improving academic achievement. From the student survey results, the high school administration implemented a mentorship training program for students in the 11th and 12th grades. These mentors led small groups of first-year high school students. The mentors shared study tips, discussed the school culture, and encouraged students to complete their homework. Personal connections were created because of the shared culture between the older and younger high school students that resulted in the younger students feeling more confident in their new environment and the older students revealing more caring attitudes.

In contrast, a low-achieving high school in which Latino students accounted for 99.5% of the student population experienced low morale. This high school had a new

principal every two years for the last 29 years. Teachers, 89.6% of whom had qualified teaching credentials, had large classes and a shortage of special education programs. The unstructured organization resulted in little improvement in average student scores on the state tests.

Having almost 100% Latino student populations has not been enough to make changes in the educational programs in high schools. Without accepting and preserving cultural learning in relationship to school size and students experience in their cultural values and without being willing to identify the wrongs in education (Hall, 1989), the future of Latino student education may be limited to a cafeteria style of adding or subtracting staff positions that structurally withstand institutionalized or formal education.

In culturally responsive teaching, concerns for students are expressed. One approach is "to establish cultural congruity in teaching [has been] integrating ethnic and cultural diversity into most . . . instructional process on a habitual basis" (Gay, 2002, p.113). This movement has been an open-ended educational process that begins with "knowing the cultures and experiences of different ethnic groups, . . . and learning how to apply multicultural examples in teaching other knowledge and skills" (Gay, 2002, p.113) so that communication can mature and equality in educational achievement can exist (Attinasi, 1994). The opposite is the reduction of the Mexican heritage to a subservient role, placing the culture in a fragile state in which "teachers fail to forge meaningful connections with their student[s] [and] students are alienated from their teachers" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 5).

Summary

Findings from the 21 case studies of high schools that placed student needs first showed changes were made in master schedules, classroom curricula, and after-school programs. Within these schools, strong leadership and professional development were also fostered. The findings of the cross-case studies revealed various features of positive attributes that were contributing factors in California high schools with high percentages of Latino students in their school populations. From the data analysis, various features were categorized into three themes: alternative interventions, caring, and culturally responsive teaching/pedagogy. In this chapter, excerpts of the cross-case analyses were included to emphasis the factors involved in increasing Latino student achievement. In the Chapter6, an overview of the current study has been presented, including a summary of the findings and discussion and implications of the study.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications of the Study

Background of the Study

This qualitative research study was focused on the cultural context of Latino students in Grades 9–12. Latino students, in comparison with other contemporary immigrant groups, have "show[n] evidence of assimilating very slowly" (Vigdor, 2008, p. 25) into the mainstream of the United States. Students of the Mexican immigrants or persons of Mexican American ancestry, a subgroup of the Hispanic population, have had a high school dropout rate of 25.5% (NCES, 2005).

In the literature review, the tribulations of people of Mexican heritage were discussed to explain how the Mexican people throughout history have been shuffled back and forth under some degree of oppression, which resulted in a silent culture that has continued to be in conflict with the Anglo American establishment. Through the theoretical framework for this study, cultural context in assimilation, enculturation, oppression, collaboration, culture capital, and high- and low-context cultures were addressed to understand classroom teaching and learning processes and cultural relevance among Latino students.

This study was a qualitative study employing a cross-case analysis of previous case studies published in dissertations from January 1999 to December 2010. To collect data, the ProQuest databases were accessed with the purpose of selecting case studies focused on Grades 9–12 in the state of California. With this approach (i.e., evaluating several cases), certain features emerged in successful strategies in helping Latino students succeed.

The qualitative cross-case analysis of 21 case studies resulted in information connecting teaching style or practices to students academic results in the selected case studies and in identification of successful predictors that might or might not have been recognized otherwise. This type of research was important in finding features in alternative programs that were connected to student engagement and to challenging Latino students. The findings were also helpful in placing a higher value on developing teaching strategies and effective instruction in the cultural context associated with Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry and in improving Hispanic students academic achievement and lowering their dropout rate.

The Research Questions

The following question was the major research question used to guide the current study: How should classroom instruction be changed to address the differences between traditional classroom culture and the cultural context of students who are Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry to improve academic achievement? From that question, three specific research questions were generated to be addressed through the study:

1. What features in culture sensitivity programs are of help to teachers in improving the learning ability of students who are Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican-American ancestry in Grades 9–12?
2. What key predictors are associated with cultural-specific programs that indicate the effects of culture on students consistent academic improvement and the effects of high-context culture in effective instruction for students who

are Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry in stimulating student learning and improving scores in statewide testing?

3. What alternative instructional approach is necessary to facilitate recognizing and resolving different points of views among students of Mexican immigrants and persons of Mexican American ancestry?

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this research study was to pinpoint contributing factors to Latino students' improvement in education in Grades 9–12. The data analysis showed no one factor could be considered the exclusive key to improving Latino students' academic achievement. Although positive attributes were found within the 21 case studies, it was clear that Latino students had to be struggling to receive the attention of public education leadership. By the time alternative approaches were executed, Latino students, with all their apparent deficits in social and institutional learning, tended to withdraw from one or more of traditional formal education teaching styles.

Data revealed the Latino student population in the state of California high schools in Grades 9–12 attended segregated schools. Most of these students entered high school below grade level. Although Latino students comprised 50.37% of the student population in California (3,118,404 out of 6,190,425), in the case studies examined as part of this current study, Latino students comprised over 70% of the student populations in those schools (California Department of Education, 2010b). The case studies were focused on high schools with high Latino student populations (over 70% of the student enrollment in each school) that either had been required to make changes or had made changes to improve academic achievement with little regard for the Latino culture. Despite the high

percentages of Latinos in the student populations and the awareness of Latino students failure rate, the political pressures resulting in poor performance on the required state tests scores were the impetus for changes to alternative programs were initiated in the schools involved in this cross-case study of California high schools.

A set of research questions was developed within the original framework to bring attention to Latino students' culture and academic achievement. As a result, 21 existing case studies were examined in the final analysis to address the purpose of the current study. Although research questions were addressed through the data analysis, the data collection indicated high schools had been mandated to make changes because of low average state test scores.

In the data collection process, the case studies were found to be connected less by connecting to the Latino culture and more by improving state test scores to improve academic achievement. The data analysis revealed various aspects relevant to Latino student achievement that was categorized into three themes: (a) alternative interventions, (b) caring, and (c) culturally responsive teaching/pedagogy. The data revealed several features that affected student achievement. For instance, in high schools that placed student needs first, administrators and staffs adjusted master schedules, changed the classroom curricula, developed afterschool programs, built strong leadership among teachers and students, and ensured provisions for professional development.

Alternative interventions. The ideology of American formal education in the United States has proven costly for some Mexican students trying to earn high school diplomas. Throughout history, the dominant culture in American society has "trie[d] to find a way to educate, train, or prepare individuals from one culture to work in another"

(Avruch, 2000, p. 59) presuming the style of the dominant culture used to deliver education should also be successful in other cultures. The creation of small high schools and small classes resulted in places where personal attention and relationship building among Latino students are emphasized; two important components in helping Latino students feel comfortable and safe in their environment. The campus improvements of colorful décor, cleanliness, and security reflected caring. Students relied on such places in which they could move freely, enabling them to take more interest in their educational future. These community-like environments were factors in promoting closer relationships between teachers and students. Positive reinforcement in the forms of encouragement and personal attention were also forms of caring and were factors in Latino students improving their learning and increasing their test scores.

The high schools that were reorganized because of legislative mandates were reformed to achieve higher average school test scores. High school leaders and teaching staffs often were not prepared to understand all that Latino students encountered in their previous high schools in terms of their teachers and school cultures. To improve student achievement, they were required to take into account available resources, teaching staff and expertise, and sufficient time and space to achieve better test scores. Several features were revealed as factors in students performance, including appropriate levels of support or support systems shaped to engage students in class curricula. In high-performing high schools or high schools that showed upward trends in API scores, the best course of action in building students interest in learning was adoption of a less traditional teaching style to allow for flexible instruction. In such classrooms and with such teachers, Latino students felt they could participate more spontaneously. A flexible high school master

schedule was credited to a school principal's flexibility and influence in meeting the needs of Latino students. With the flexible master schedule, the principal could modify use of time and space to achieve better test scores.

The reshaping of school culture and curriculum in alternative programs such as AVID and Puente varied in effectiveness inside the classroom. These established programs were prescribed processes that, when combined with other features, were even more effective, especially with Latino students who tested below full performance expectations. Significant changes were nearly impossible without leadership and support from school and district administration and the teaching staff. However, in some cases, leaders in the lower echelons of the school hierarchy made positive changes in Latino student learning without support from individuals with higher authority. Such leadership resulted in rigorous steps to meet student needs.

Data also revealed that school leaders set aside time in the master schedule for professional development. However, opportunities for teachers to enroll in offsite workshops to broaden their teaching skills were limited due to a lack of funding. Professional development was restricted to that acquired through staff meetings, conferences, or discussion sessions. The degree of commitment of teachers and leadership was dependent on their resourcefulness and professional development. Thus, additional funds were needed for professional development, especially for training in understanding and accepting cultural differences.

Rather than Latino students being unwilling to learn or lazy, the data revealed that when teachers initiated steps to embrace or value students cultural identities, Latino students worked hard to meet full performance expectations. Individuals who assumed

either/or attitudes in understanding someone's attitudes or behaviors could easily misunderstand students behaviors, especial those of Latino students. Teachers were rigorous in creating programs, strategies, and alternative methods to fit students learning skills. In ideal situations, teachers set aside time to assess student data and to collaborate to find ways to improve student achievement, all working together for one cause.

Caring. Latino student learning showed improvement when positive reinforcement was given in the form of caring, creating connections to cultural identity and giving personal attention to enable Latino students to connect with both individuals in authority and to their peers. Findings in the cross-case studies revealed that Latino students wanted to learn, especially when teachers were caring and understanding of the contributing factors to the students poor study habits. Teacher patience and personal attention in explaining material to students were characteristic of high-context cultures. Latino high school students responded positively when caring was genuine, shown through teachers being interested in the students "well-being inside and outside the classroom" and in the teacher "always available to the student" (Garza, 2009, p. 316).

Valenzuela (1999) indicated that "predominantly non-Latino teaching staff sees students as not sufficiently caring about school . . . [the same feelings run true with Latino students,] the teachers [are seen] as not sufficiently caring for them" (p. 61). Teacher behaviors suggested students should exhibit caring with "abstract or aesthetic" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 61) behaviors to advance academic achievement. This mismatch of communication could result in making it more difficult when teachers describe, "abstract and complex concepts . . . [taught in the classroom;] the input that students receive can often be incomprehensible, due to the newness of the concept, the language, or both"

(Zwiers, 2008, p. 42). When a welcoming atmosphere was created inside the classroom, Latino students were more involved in classroom participation. In a number of cases, the students expressed that the small class sizes or small high schools, along with teacher and principal caring, helped them feel safe and comfortable in their surroundings.

A clean, community-like campus and strong leadership were other contributing factors in students wanting to learn. Latino students' apparent traits were oriented to community environments in which close relationships with teachers and staff members were possible. The data revealed that often Latino students wanted to learn, especially when the school culture was associated with a flexible organizational structure in the form of the master schedule and with collaboration to integrate higher expectations. The simultaneous exercise of positive attributes and acceptance of their ethnicity, which conformed more to Latino student learning, helped in improving academic achievement. A family-like community of learning inside the high school was a critical factor in how Latino students responded to high school rules and authority. Once the school leadership or teaching staff realized alternative approaches were equated to improved test scores among Latino students, more informal ways of increasing patience, personal attention, and higher expectations were developed.

Culturally responsive teaching/pedagogy. Although Latino students had limited access to programs in Mexican culture, for a high percentage of Latino students, teacher pursuits resulted in curricula in which Latino culture and language were integral parts of the formal educational setting. According to Hall (1990), "culture reflects the way one learns, since culture is a 'learned and shared behavior.' . . . [that] educators might have a

better grasp . . . [if they] stud[ied] the acquired context in which other people learn" (p. 47).

Connectedness to culture can be emphasized collectively in groups or individually. Persons from collectivist cultures have been shown to perform better when working in-group settings and when performing interdependent tasks. In contrast, persons from individualist cultures are focused on themselves, viewing time "as an adversary in the sense that group interactions are a temporary means" (Stanton, 2000, p. 2). Collaboration among teachers, leadership in sharing ideas among school personnel, and teacher discussion on student data was contributing factors to improved student learning.

In the Hispanic culture, the language is both verbal and nonverbal, inclusive of Mexican heritage, and reflects strong family ties, a collective orientation to community life, a preference to talk around the issues, and more ease in informal environments (Espinosa, 1995). One could argue that these traits are found in high-context cultures (Hall, 1989; Wurtz, 2005). A low-context culture is the reverse of a high-context culture in terms of style and flexibility. It is individualistic instead of collectivistic and task-oriented to meet deadlines rapidly in place of stability (Avruch, 2000; Hall, 1989).

Data revealed that the existing domination of the Anglo American view of history has been continued in the classroom. As discussed previously, the classroom in Case 4 was equipped with two textbooks, containing a total of 457 pages. In those books, one paragraph was focused on Latino theatre. This small example showed the historical value of Mexican and other Latino cultures, underscoring the fact that for change to result in service programs and a culturally sensitive curriculum, the Latino culture must first be valued. In this case, the drama teachers continued to use their own resourcefulness to

create plays and literature to connect with the students' culture. Through the course, students were provided with a different meaning in history and students skillfully learned how to create another perspective for understanding their own self-identities. By the end of the course, the teachers had built a relationship with the students; and the students had formed a stronger base from their experiences, which helped them improve their reading, writing, problem solving, and creative thinking and to identify other assets formed in positive ways beyond the drama course.

In public school systems as a whole, the power structure has generally been based on that of the elite. Most aspects of the existing social system, including pedagogic principles, have been rooted in social class systems that "require familiarization with the dominant culture and all its beliefs, behaviors and ideals" for one to succeed (Howard, 2003, p. 198). In general, the American educational system has been "assumed to be the best in the world and equally applicable to all peoples and must therefore be imposed upon . . . [everyone] without regard to their own culture" (Hall, 1989, p. 210). Despite the resistance of leadership to including Chicano studies or courses to bridge students and their cultural identities, teachers were convinced that with such courses the students would feel connected to their self-identities. Moreover, the case studies (see Appendix B: Case 2 & 4) showed that when students connected to their culture and felt more confident, their school performance improved. Thus, this dominant system has resulted in the failure of certain groups, including Mexican students, to attain appropriate academic achievement.

Discussion

As discussed in previous chapters there is no one approach to handle the conflict on meeting student needs. The influences that shape students' perceptions are expressed across the cases in how teachers' messages are perceived by students through encouragement, positive feedback and caring attitude. Summation of this current research resulted in a more significant expansion of knowledge than would have occurred with a single case study. Additional insights into high-context culture and students' conflict are framed within cross-case analysis results in opportunities and growth strengthen by connecting similar contexts and learning from previous cases to develop new understandings of the role of culture in an educational system. The results of this study have included the literature on low- and high-context culture theory, which is relevant to the educational system, especially for Latino students. When a cultural identity is ignored or misunderstood, it may become buried relatively fixed perception harming the relationship between teaching and learning. Communication from high-context or low-context, convey by different points in how to relate to one another. Culture fluency is articulated in several aspects that it becomes necessary to explore the meaning making it more complex to consciously consider the meaning on both sides of the isle.

This theory on high context and low context culture applied to the formal and informal education of Latino students has revealed individualism and collectivists' messages by the context surrounding Latino culture and language in pubic high school setting. Adapting takes on a different meaning when authority has composed the rules by which everyone must abide. As the case in educational institutions, the effect of policies and practices carried out by the dominant force of leadership has made it more

challenging to reverse the effects of schooling in terms of accepting and valuing the Latino culture to create relevant pedagogy in which their approach to learning is incorporated.

Studies have shown that high school resources for Latino students are limited for programs in Mexican culture. If circumstances are reversed and more Latino culture and language are included in the curriculum, Latino students may believe that their culture and language are relevant in education. Instead, their culture and identity are considered currently considered irrelevant. Economically, the dropout rate is costly due to the likelihood the student opportunities lessen to low wages or jobless, especially for Latino students. Though the research focuses on students' home culture is an essential part of education, the indirect effects of ignoring or misunderstanding Latino students' home culture plays important role in socioeconomics and labor force. The messages from direct and indirect influences through high school environment and academic achievement contribute to the effects of society burden or contribution. Primarily in the literature, culture was an essential part over values, perceptions, and reality in how it is perceived and interpreted. Bringing together literature and results of this research the importance of rethinking how to change the classroom setting to engage Latino students to relate to home culture more likely increase tax base, contribute to civic engagement and add tax dollars to social services. If drastic measures are not implemented to reverse Latinos' dropout rate then good portion of the dropouts could continue to weaken the already limited resources from social services, education funds used for unchanging results, status quo unskilled labor force, and increase threat of global competitiveness in major sciences associated with high wages and infrastructure investment.

Public school education has been around for decades for minority students, with static social conditions instilling practices stereotyping Latino ethnicity. The studies have shown repeatedly that Latino students genuinely want to learn and succeed. However, the education system built on linear thinking has resulted in increasing the uncaring and unfriendliness of the high school climate. In such a climate, the notion of informal education that is part of Latino culture and ethnicity does not correlate with academic achievement, according to the majority of Anglo American teachers and the majority of Latino students as is evidenced in the case studies. Despite the findings that show caring, collaboration, personal attention, and other positive features to which Latino students respond and the difference positive teachers make in the learning of Latino students, more efforts from the establishment must be made in valuing the culture in the curricula, something that has been ignored far too long.

Strengths of the Study

The strength of the study was the number of features that aimed towards academic achievement that high schools can use for Latino student population. The contribution of this study was smaller schools and classrooms that fit Latino student's personal and academic needs, especially for Latino students who were below grade level. Smaller high school with safe, clean, secure campuses, openness, and comfortable surroundings were factors in getting Latino students to connect to a family-like environment. Smaller high schools with staffs equipped to face student challenges were essential in addressing Latino students' different levels of academic performance. In smaller high schools, students felt the connectedness of small communities, resulting in a sense of security and

closeness in which students could feel the caring of the staff. Positive school culture, Latino students felt comfortable in small school environment and they felt teachers cared about them. From teachers caring attitude and schools' comfortable environments, students had a better attitude and interest in learning. So much, they felt comfortable in speaking with teachers outside of the classroom. This caring attitude by teachers showed especially true, when teachers acknowledged the students by name and listen to the student issues.

A teacher's key component in helping Latino students achieve success was to identify student needs and to understand the issues that could prevent the students from succeeding. Teachers caring attitudes that touched the student home culture positively impacted how students responded to wanting to learn and helped students to engage in meeting full performance expectations. This approach embodied a mode of caring that worked well with Latino students behind grade level. Research findings found teachers with passion and perseverance in teaching courses in Chicano studies added historical importance to American history and connections to Latino culture as it related to their heritage. Teachers with a strong Mexican heritage who could draw from their own personal experiences from Mexico and the United States in Mexican and Latin American history could connect to students' home culture. Students could then reclaim their culture and language within academic settings. In addition, Latino students who enrolled in the Latino courses transformed their educational experience and became more empowered to pursue higher goals.

In all, the findings showed community like environment and teaching holistic style can provide a model to help Latino high school students succeed academic

achievement that can narrow the Latino high school dropout rate and for Latino students to reach for higher goals.

Limitations of the Study

The current study was based on existing case studies. These cases yielded a wealth of data, and the cross-case analysis resulted in an opportunity to develop a new understanding of the role of culture in an educational system. However, because of the limited number of established programs related to cultural sensitivity among Latino students, pinpointing the primary and secondary features that resulted in cultivating respect for the Latino students culture and integrating it into education processes was difficult. Because of the limited resources, including textbooks and specific courses associated with Mexican and Latino culture, other features were used related to the association of informal education with Latino student culture. In sum, although students who are Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans of Mexican heritage comprised the majority of the Latino student population in California and the case studies findings might not be applicable to Latino subgroups that are more aligned with a low-context culture and reside outside in other parts of the country.

Implications of the Study

The wealth of data from the 21 cases discussed in the current study clearly showed that Latino high school students have been left behind. Despite being the largest minority group in the state of California and in the public schools, these people have not played influential roles related to educational policy and practices. The consequences of assimilation through traditional linear teaching have been the erosion of Latino cultural

identity and a perception of Latinos as being lazy. Thus, many Latino students have failed to meet academic requirements.

The success of Latino students at smaller schools or in smaller classes, an alternative approach used to reduce the achievement gap, has suggested another way of viewing formal education. The primary distinction in public schools between alternative methods and regular traditional methods has been the degree of value placed on the ways Latinos learn. Although Latino students appear to navigate through the traditional educational system with some success, overtime, the patterns of Latino achievement have become the footprint without an explanation of how the impression was made. Despite the focus on test scores and the linear thinking upon which the majority of teaching practices are based, the studies examined revealed varied forms of interaction that ultimately resulted in school success. The commitment to work with Latino students to enable them to succeed and the methods used to meet higher goals have comprised the beginning of understanding how Latino students learn to achieve higher goals. The administrators and teachers in the 21cases were transformed and valued the Latino culture and language as key components in improving academic achievement so that all may benefit from social capital.

Recommendations of Future Research

A number of issues were identified in conducting the current study that should be researched further. Caring was an important component in Latino student achievement, but the meaning of caring was highly personal. Relating caring at deeper level to informal education connected to Latino student learning should be studied as a separate research topic. A cross-case analysis on Latino student achievement should also be the subject of

ongoing research to create models that can withstand the challenges teachers face in terms of limited funding and resistance to change.

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Appendix A: Definition of Terms

The terms that follow are often used in the educational environment but generally are not used in the social science of conflict resolution. The definition of these key terms is based on the California Department of Education standardized definition, unless stated otherwise.

AVID Program: The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program for grades 6 through 12 is aimed at students with a grade point average B, C, and D who have the desire to go to college and are willing to meet the demands of the program. The program places students in rigorous curricula to increase their chances of advancement and to enroll in college or university. The goal is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students, especially minority, rural and low-income students, to succeed in a global society.

API: Academic Performance Index (API) reports provide information about if Public Schools meet state requirements.

A-G Requirements; Courses required for high school graduation and college admission. California Education Code establishes minimum courses and credit requirements for graduation from California high schools.

Hispanic/Latino: The usage of this term is considered an ethnic and not a race identifier. The data collection for federal and state reports and literature often use the terms interchangeably. Hispanic or Latino identifiers are used for subgroups that fall under Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Central Americans. The research interest for this

study concerns participants who identify as having a Mexican ethnicity, the largest subgroup and the primary Latin/Hispanic group in the State of California. However, specificity in documents may be open to interpretation where documents make reference to Latino or Hispanic, so to keep some consistency Latino and Hispanic is used interchangeably and Mexican is used in historical content and to illuminate certain points.

HSSSE: High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) is comprehensive survey on student engagement and school climate issues (http://ceep.indiana.edu). It offers teachers and administrators actionable information on school characteristics that shape the student experience. Some of the case studies use the HSSSE survey as an instrument to assess student engagement at high school with a high percentage of Latino students. The results of the case studies were compared to the results of a larger study HSSE as a gage to determine student engagement. However, the HSSSE 2009 report (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010) represents only 6.5% Latino students and .9% English Learners out of 42,754 students that participated in the survey. The HSSSE 2006 report (Yazzie-Mintz, 2007) represented only 7% Latino students and 3% special education students out of 81,499 students that participated, which is significantly disproportionate in representation of the Latino student population.

Puente Program: PUENTE program is designed for Mexican-American and Latino students with the purpose of increasing the number of minorities to attend college or university. PUENTE program (www.puente.net) pays a considerable amount of attention to instruction in reading, writing, academic counseling, and mentoring. Initially, the goal of the program was to incorporate Mexican culture associated with “Familia” into the

instruction, but the growth of the program necessitated a change to target all Latino/Hispanic students, which weakened some of the association with the “Familia.”

Appendix B: Within-Case Study Descriptions

Case Study 1 Description

Purpose.

The purpose of the case study was to determine the effects of a Chicano/Latin American Studies course are on Mexican-American high students ethnic identity after taking the course. The research identifies characteristics that effected student experiences under Ethnic studies. The high school student enrollment comprised of 74% Latino population or approximately 1,506 students and approximately of 1,607 students were eligible for free or reduced lunch in total of 2,035 students in comparison to 21.7% Latino teachers or approximately 18 teachers in total of 83 teaching staff.

Findings and Themes.

According to the data, the school's administration and school counselors resisted approving the course but, after the teacher argument of the value in the Chicano studies, the course was approved with conditions. The teacher had to advertise the ethnic course as a college preparatory course and persuade students to register voluntary to enroll in the course. As a result, 21 Latino students were part of the classroom population and the researcher interviewed eight out of the 21 Latino students. Findings revealed the teacher's was born in Mexico and moved to the United States in his high school years. The teacher discussed his high school and college years, how he faced ethnic barriers and oppression in school and recognized the existing culture impeded Latino student's progress. This experience led him to obtain a teaching degree, now gainfully employed in his present position. Teacher's interest and passion put forward a proposal on

Chicano/Latin American course, which had been approved due to the teacher's persistence to be part of the high school's course schedule. Student's walked into a classroom full of Mexican and Latin American décor on the walls which added richness of posters of Aztec symbols, North and South American historical ruins with student photos as part of the scenery. Researcher of this study emphasized the teacher's Mexican heritage was useful to draw from his own personal experiences of Mexico and USA through the curriculum that represented Mexican and Latin American history. The teacher interchangeably used Spanish and English to present the daily activities which connected to the students ethnic culture and history.

Some of the students felt comfortable in speaking Spanish but hesitated due to their experience of former years in school teachers enforced English only and being bilingual was considered a liability not an asset. Teacher's openness and comfort in using two languages, student's felt more at ease interacted with more confidence and showed a look of self-respect in their identity. Findings showed the longer the student's became involved in course content, student's engaged more in class participation. Also, students worked harder in other classes, reclaiming their cultural history, transformative their educational experience between the past and present, established better relationships with Latinos and non-Latinos, and they felt more empowered to pursue higher goals.

The researcher results showed three themes: 1) ethnic identity, 2) critical awareness, and 3) academic interests.

Case Study 2 Description

Purpose.

This case study was to identify factors that contributed to student achievement and to student engagement in high performing urban high school. The high school profile comprised of 71% Latino student population or approximately 2,286 students of the total student population of 3220, and 21 Hispanic teachers represented 16.2% faculty staff in 2006-07 school year.

Findings and themes.

Data revealed the high school campus was clean within a closed campus yet the landscape provided an open setting showcasing outstanding achievement awards on various achievements along the main office exterior corridor. Observations detailed the students behavior as orderly and body language with a hint of self-confidence as the students comingled or walked to their classrooms. In excerpts of interviews, teachers emphasized campus grounds in security and landscape kept clean gave students a safe place to focus on their studies. The findings revealed Math and English teachers patience and endurance in explaining extensively in clarifying content area and reinforced in areas, student's increased their knowledge in the content area. In Spanish class, teachers connected with students by creating an inviting environment speaking in English and Spanish. Teacher's creativity in teaching techniques engaged students in learning and was proactive in interacting daily activities. The Biology lab showed patience and encouraged students to expand their thinking in lab experiments. In the researcher's interview with the Drama teacher, the researcher found the teaching style was impressive and empowering. Drama class was the most impressive class in how the teacher

empowered the students to take part in various projects. The students discussed budgets, planning on a major production, development of a fundraiser, and scheduled meetings. The researcher explained the students responsibility was impressive and the teacher made sure the students progressed in meeting their goals. In addition, the learning process displayed problem-solving, decision-making, and self-confidence.

The researcher's results showed four themes: 1) the safe school environment supported by the parents and community, 2) teaching staff in caring for the students and patient to help student's to succeed, 3) parent networking, 4) leadership and school's structure of high expectation for academic future.

Case Study 3 Description

Purpose.

The case study was to examine the leadership constructs at a high performing urban high school in order to determine the relationships, patterns, and practices that lead to high achievement in math. In addition, the study examined how instructional leaders at the school site responded to providing leadership for the mathematics program without content expertise in this area. The high school's profile proportionately Latino students of 84% or approximately 1,957 students out of 2,330 student population in one urban high school.

Findings and themes.

In the Math department, the department chair developed a curriculum related to Latino student learning ability which changed the teaching style from linear to collaborative thinking. Changes involved teacher training in sharing information of student data and insights in ways to improve Latino student test scores with the aid of

Math coaches. The coach's responsibility involved observing classroom instruction providing useful information in teaching practices to help teachers to develop relevant curriculum in meeting the needs of Latino students. The collaborative student assessment between teachers and Math coaches, keeping limited funding in mind, teachers were mindful to find inexpensive aids, such as; whiteboards and alternative methods to keep the students alert, and cultivated which surged student's interest. Whiteboards, a less expensive instrument, worked well in presenting instant results of students understanding of daily activities. Teachers had immediate view of student's answers which presented instant results for the teacher to assist the student on seeking the correct answer and to help the student to understand the material better. This simple method in connecting with students learning, Latino students became more engaged and interactive in classroom participation.

In the Math program, teachers were required to attend workshops, and formal training to increase effective math instruction. In addition, the teachers conferred with each other in developing best practices in how to bring students to full performance with the approach to assess student's learning patterns. Teaching staff brought about a change in direction on guidelines and goals in the department towards student achievement. The high school's professional development was built from in-house cross analysis of learning among all teachers. Their focus was intuitive awareness, inclusive shared values, and respect of cultural differences. The high school's structure changed from linear to collaboration thinking which created flexible approaches for solving various issues that arose in the math department between instruction and learning. Sophisticated software provided another means to create different scenarios in resolving problems in various

learning math concepts. This source on math concepts gave teacher's the flexibility to modify curriculum to fit more closely to student learning. If student required more personal attention, students were transferred to smaller classroom, where students received more time in learning the main concepts. Department chairs and teachers collaborated, and the researcher wrote the department chair was instrumental in creating additional approaches for teachers to engage with students and improve classroom practices.

The researcher results showed three themes: 1) High school changes were forced by political demands and low student achievement, 2) teacher collaboration, professional development and teamwork, and 3) Math department leadership in instruction and positive classroom culture.

Case Study 4 Description

Purpose.

This case study's attention was on Latino high school student experiences from a drama course taken as an elective in high school. The purpose of the case study was to bring attention to the arts contribution to improving student academic achievement. The school's profile comprised of 97% Latino student population and 82% English Language Learners of all student population.

Findings and themes.

The teachers interest in teaching Drama courses received resistance from the school's administrators and other faculty members. However, teachers persistence and usage of their skills helped them receive approval to offer drama courses. The permission came with challenges for the Drama teachers in teacher support, limited materials, and

funding to teach the course which resources developed into finding materials and creative ways to stimulate interest of students. The first sighting in the classroom appearance went back to yesteryear, stage old from wear and tear but stable enough to hold the student's rehearsals. The room spacious with a few round tables and chairs organized for student meetings in ways students had the option to move as they saw fit to be comfortable. On the bookshelf held two textbooks totaled of 457 pages, unfolded into a total text of one paragraph dedicated to Latino theatre. Only Latino students were enrolled in drama course in a high school that comprised of 97% Latino student population.

Free flowing style supported the Drama teachers method of teaching. Drama teachers did not teach behind a desk, they walked around to ensure the students were moving forward in their projects and addressed any issues that might hold the student's back from learning. Teachers sought out materials and sources of literature which helped students to connect with their heritage. In keeping with the meaning of student's history and culture, teachers instructed students to create their own vignettes that had a personal meaning to them. Students outside of the confinement of sitting behind desks as in other classrooms, students worked in teams organized in different areas of the classroom. And, Drama teachers circulated around the different groups which generated active learning. Curriculum processes integrated rigorous creative writing vignettes in two languages, Spanish and English, and oral communication. Initially students beginning the course displayed fear shown through silence and resistance in speaking on stage. From the teacher's encouragement, students gained confidence in overcoming embarrassment in speaking in front of a group, they practiced reading and writing and communicating in both languages. The teacher's holistic style of teaching helped students to feel more

comfortable in their accomplishments which students showed by devoting time and energy in working harder to increase their ability to act out their role on stage. By the end of the course students left more self-confident of their cultural identity and the willingness to increase their energy in other courses.

Drama teachers encouraged students to use collaboration in writing their own plays, to be open in making mistakes, rewrite until the words become connected to self-identity, and enjoy the results. The results showed the teachers enjoyed their role which showed in their efforts in assigning students with responsibilities to self-govern in writing, reading, creating, organization, and usage of two languages in performance that reflected Latino culture. This helped students in active learning that consisted of vignettes practiced in both languages. Drama teachers presented ideas for students to write their own plays, they taught students self-expression in their writings, encouraged them not be afraid to fail and to rewrite until the words connected with results of self-identity. These exercises manifested into rigorous writing, reading, and self-expression. Students transformed with more self-confidence, a significant improvement in reading comprehension, oral and writing communication that fostered engagement with their peers, and teamwork in writing meaningful dialogue in fluent English and Spanish. Teachers enthusiasm showed in their efforts in assigning students with responsibilities to self-govern in writing, reading, creating, organization, and usage of two languages in performance that reflected Latino culture. This active learning in vignettes practiced in both languages, students were more incline to use their learning experience into other classrooms. Latino students benefited from various experiences that increased their self skills, reading comprehension, time management, and creative thinking. In addition, the

exercises and experiences not only help aid the bilingual program department but it showed alternative method in non-traditional approach to be employ in other classrooms. And, the non-traditional approach not only encouraged students to succeed but the techniques were useful to help aid the bilingual program department and other subject to be employ in other classrooms.

The researcher's results showed seven themes: 1) effective instruction and learning in arts appreciation, 2) student empowerment, 3) alternative learning in literacy and people skills, 4) cultural capital and ethnic identity, 5) meeting state standards with less than adequate resources, 6) education devaluation in arts appreciation programs, and 7) theory associated with reflection and interpersonal processes connected to effective learning.

Case Study 5 Description

Purpose.

The case study was to identify instructional strategies which improved academic achievement with high percentage of minority students under six high performing high schools. Of the six high schools demographics comprised of 22% to 67% Latino student population.

Findings and themes.

Latino students showed gains in Academic Performance Index (API) scores. In one high school students made great strides from 498 API score in 2000 to significant gain of 750 API score in 2008. This improvement was due to usage of instructional coaches. Their role was to evaluate instructional programs and collaborate with teachers in ways to improve teaching strategies to fit student needs. From another high school the

researcher results showed the Latino student API score of 590 in 2000 improved significantly with API score 779 in 2008 in comparison with Anglo student API score of 710 in 2000 with modest growth of API score 822 in 2008 reducing the achievement gap from 155 API points in 2003 to 43 API points in 2008. One of the contributing factors was teachers worked collaborative exchanging student assessments for a better understanding of student results. Additional information provided teachers with feedback and extensive support in scaffolding instructional strategies towards student improvement in API growth. Data revealed school administration and teaching staff worked collaborative in placing students to the appropriate classes. Student entry scores provided useful information for high school staff members to assign the students to the appropriate class. Also, the researcher wrote additional classes of small groups were created, adjusting instruction and time to fit student needs to improve their low scores.

The researcher results showed three themes: 1) high expectations of all students, 2) alternative programs for underachievers, and 3) student data to assess student needs. These themes were oriented around minority groups under six high performing high schools.

Case Study 6 Description

Purpose.

This case study was to identify factors related to student engagement that promoted student achievement in high performing continuation high school. High school enrollment was mostly at-risk students with a student population of 86% Latino high school students, and school's student population comprised of 66% male students. In

addition, the average age of student population was slightly higher than the average student age within the same grade at a traditional high school.

Findings and themes.

Using teacher interviews, the researcher's data showed professional development was an important component in the success of the school. Their professional development was conducted from in-house through staff meetings and workshops. The school's culture was built around a commitment to student success which reflected a strong leadership in developing programs to increase the percentage of high school graduates. Also, the school's efficient communication system of internet usage, and phone messages displayed informal ways to keep parents abreast of student progress. From the researcher's observations, the data showed teachers and students seemed to work together in caring and safe environment. This positive atmosphere was supported by the principal's approach in developing alternative methods to help students to succeed. Teacher's survey showed a mixed value in student's performance. The teacher responses with the highest value showed students were interested in working towards improving their grade level and teachers felt they were skilled in helping students to improve academic achievement. Also, teachers felt the principal and teaching staff worked together to meet the student's personal and academic needs.

Student interviews showed students felt prior to attending this school, they did not care about school. The positive school culture, they felt comfortable in small school environment and they felt teacher's cared about student. This caring attitude by teacher's showed especially true, when teachers acknowledged the student's by name and listen to the student issues. From teachers caring attitude and school's comfortable environment,

students had a better attitude and interest in learning. So much, they felt comfortable in speaking with teachers outside of the classroom.

The researcher's results showed three themes: 1) strong leadership, 2) student accountability, 3) sensitivity towards the student culture and caring of student's transition from traditional to alternative programs.

Case Study 7 Description

Purpose.

This case study was to explore existing alternative programs to identify key features that contributed to academic gains in student achievement of at-risk students enrolled at Comprehensive High School, Intervention Program and Alternative High School. The researcher wrote student population was predominately Latino ethnicity which reflected 76.5%, 81.5%, and 92.4%, respectively at three high schools listed above.

Findings and themes.

The researcher results were organized by three categories; Rigor, Relevance and Relationship to help define key features connected to academic achievement or top issues that identify student weaknesses. The researcher's results from teacher's responses based on at-risk students which highlighted important issues that challenged the teacher's to get student's at grade level showed student's learning ability came with personal issues, as well as, behind in grade level, student's started class unprepared, student absenteeism, and lack of funds to purchase materials to meet student needs. On another research question which the researcher asked teachers to respond to what steps were needed to improve student achievement the results to improve connectedness between teacher and

student, collaboration among teaching staff, and caring in student needs, small class size and challenge the student to improve their learning ability. In the researcher's structured interview of teacher responses organized by the three categories results showed Relationship category was number one, teachers placing this category significantly more important based on responses than number two being Rigor followed by Relevance. The researcher stated Alternative High School with the highest enrollment of Latino student population was the most effective program in academic achievement set apart by small class size and building relationships between student and teacher.

The researcher results showed two major findings: 1) develop alternative programs that consider small size classrooms and targets at-risk student needs, and 2) teacher increase caring and student learning towards building a relationship between teacher and student.

Case Study 8 Description

Purpose.

This case study was to identify factors which influence academic achievement and to determine if a relationship exists between academic achievement and student engagement in one urban high school. The researcher wrote high school's profile comprised of 91% Latino student population and 85% of all students were listed as socioeconomically disadvantaged. Also, the researcher stated the high school under study was recognized and earned its first nationwide honor as one of the top high schools in the country.

Findings and themes.

The researcher results showed the high school programs were project-base, a career training center which helped students earn credentials in a profession while earning their high school diploma. The researcher wrote the high school offered four career programs that provided students to acquire a skill and a way to motivate students to engage in academic learning. However, students with illegal status even with measurable academic results, the students lose the opportunity to benefit financially in using their certification for a better place to expand their skills and to advance in society. In addition, the researcher stated the high school goals were to educate all students to be college eligible, student accountability, and project-base learning.

Researcher's interview results showed technology program was key component to academic achievement. The program encouraged students to develop their skills in reading and writing, and creative thinking. The researcher stated the high school's Technology center was equipped with the state of the art equipment, software and repair shop. The learning tools provided resources for students to instill skills in problem-solving, teamwork, complex thinking, which encouraged students to learn a variety of skills in software, equipment, and repairs. The researcher explained in a Spanish classroom, students used computer technology to research projects assigned by the teacher. The students were required to translate the research in both English and Spanish, as well as, develop a Power Point presentation based on the student's research. The researcher explained the high standards in technology were supported by the school superintendent and all technical problems were resolved by the district technical support team and students technology. Researcher stated from the principal's interview results

that the high school's success was attributed to collaboration among the teaching staff, small size classrooms, and familial cohesive professional atmosphere. In addition, the researcher stated teaching staff invited corporate representatives and government agency members to meet and speak to their students. These visits helped students to think about their goals and think about their future after high school. The researcher discussed the alternative approach in high school's teaching model revealed patterns in school vision, activity involvement, collaboration among faculty members and administration, and positive and safe school culture.

The researcher results showed four themes: 1) high school's vision for students to be college eligible, 2) state of the art technology to develop student skills, 3) career credential preparation, and cultural sensitivity.

Case Study 9 Description

Purpose.

This case study was to explore how high schools managed their resources in improved and non-improved academic performance in eight high schools divided equally in high and low achieving schools. The researcher results showed the high-achieving high schools Latino enrollment ranged between 42.2% and 92.2% and low-achieving high schools Latino enrolment ranged between 42.5% and 99.4% out of total student population. The researcher's descriptions of four high achieving schools nearly matched percentage of Latino enrollment in four low achieving high schools. However, the percentage of Latino enrollment was applied to different total student enrollment between high and low achieving high schools. This case study had a wealth of information but to

not overshadow other case studies, I limited the scope below to the top high school enrolled highest percentage Latino population in high and low achieving high schools.

Findings and themes.

The researcher results from the high-achieving high school with 92.9% Latino student population out of 4,144 total student population showed their leadership reflected decentralized organization, meaning responsibility and accountability were distributed among the teaching staff with the principal at the helm. Results from teacher interviews showed the principal invited open communication, encouraged collaboration during meetings, and in school's practices surveys were distributed to all students to be filled out to better understand how to meet student needs. The researcher stated from some of student responses wrote they requested more mentorship. As a result the high school implemented a student mentorship training program for students in 11th or 12th grade. The mentorship consisted of older students lead small groups of first year of high school students. The mentors shared tips to students in how to study, discuss about the school's culture and encourage students to complete their homework. This connection helped the new students to transition into high school and they felt more confident in a new environment.

The researcher stated professional development was a key factor in academic achievement. Professional development instilled trust and understanding among the school's principal and teaching staff in sharing active participation of leadership and teaching strategies to improve student achievement. Teachers gained from observing other teacher's classrooms and teacher's welcomed their feedback because the information added to effective instruction. The researcher explained teacher's showed

positive attitudes in meetings, a cohesive unit which reflected teamwork, strong leadership in ownership, and all suggestions were welcomed. The researcher results from observation in staff meetings showed teachers discussed teaching strategies and student's strengths and weaknesses. During the meeting a department chair announced that students needed to improve their writing skills. The attendees agreed to add exercises that built their writing skills. The researcher stated this high school built positive culture that shared student accountability which reflected high morale among the school's and students despite the financial constraints faced by a large school.

In contrast, the researcher results from low-achieving high school with 99.5% Latino student population out of 820 total student population showed their leadership reflected the principal's position was filled with new principal every two years for the last 29 years. The leadership fostered negative attitudes among the teaching staff. The researcher results from teacher interviews showed teachers blamed that their school district was responsible in high school principal turnover. The school's district intervened in the high school's principal's leadership that discouraged principal's to remain employed at the high school. The researcher stated the chronic turnover impacted the trust and confidence among the high school's teaching staff and administrators which influenced their approach in teaching strategies. The researcher explained 89.6% faculty staff earned their teaching credentials and funding per student exceeded slightly above high achieving high school conducted in this study but student results showed little improvement in state test scores. The researcher wrote this high school suffered from shortage in teachers, large class size, lack of special education programs, and

unstructured organization. In addition, the teaching staff was frustrated in school's practices which showed through Latino student academic achievement.

The researcher results showed four themes: 1) leadership, 2) collaboration and professional development, 3) organization in school's policy and practices, and 4) student support and meeting student needs.

Case Study 10 Description

Purpose.

This case study was to identify what factors contributed to English Language Learners (ELL) academic achievement at a small conversion high school. The researcher's high school profile showed the proportion of student population was Latino of 94% or approximately 432 students in total 460 students. It employed teaching staff of 23 teachers all fluent in Spanish, 15 Latino teachers, eight Anglo-American teachers, and one Latino principal and two counselors, one Latino and one Anglo-American that spoke English only, were from an existing staff from former comprehensive high school.

Findings and themes.

The researcher explained the larger high school failed to improve its State tests; that the school district was directed by the State of California to reorganize the high school into manageable structure. This directive reflected six smaller highs with the existing teaching staff and student population under the same space. After the reorganization, most of the ELL'S predominately Latino students were moved to one small high school that was designated for ELL's instruction. However, if student that required ELL courses and moved to another school, the student was required to take ELL's courses at the designated high school for English Learners. The researcher stated

ELL's courses was taught under one high school which increased the ELL classroom size up to 38 students, larger than most traditional classroom size.

The researcher results from classroom observations and document reviews showed students responded positive to teacher's methods in teaching instruction. The researcher explained Mexican, a former ELL student, used past student experience and examples of woodworking projects from the teacher's hobby to explain the application of Algebra and Geometry which increased students interest in the subject matter. The teacher, who taught physics and biology, used theatrical movements that showed interest in presenting different approaches in connecting with the students. And, the English teacher used storytelling with the flair of costumes, stage voices, and candle-lit stories to encourage students to be more involved in academic learning. One the teacher's technique to keep the student's attention was to swipe the chime bells which signaled students to be quiet and listen in the classroom. The researcher results from teacher that taught in a traditional style showed the students participated less and quieter if the student's name was on the detention list. The teacher used the whiteboard to list all student names and check marks symbolized who completed assigned homework; classroom work, and detention. The researcher stated the teacher displayed minimal interaction with the students. After class the teacher approached the researcher which reinforced the researcher's observation in the teacher felt a few students were ruining the learning process for other students.

In the researcher results from observations and teacher interviews, most of the teachers showed strong feelings in helping the students to succeed. A few of the teaching staff were former ELL students and their experiences connected with the students.

Teachers that used alternative approaches that incorporated patience and flexible to meet student needs showed Latino students were more responsive in learning and more felt more confident to ask more questions to get a better understanding of the coursework. Despite, professional development was set aside for more administration topics, and less focus on how to meet ELL student needs, teachers used their former experience to develop a plan to encourage students to succeed. The researcher wrote the newness of the reorganization, and the added responsibilities in being a principal and cohort with five other principals in responsibilities of the shared complex facility might explain the high school's lack of strong leadership and support to address effective strategies to meet student needs.

The researcher results showed four themes: 1) organization, 2) leadership, 3) personalization, and 4) effective instructional practices.

Case Study 11 Description

Purpose.

This case study was to examine Puente teachers formal and informal learning inside the classroom and to identify what teaching practices were influenced through professional development taken at Puente Summer institute.

Findings and themes.

The researcher results from observations in professional development activities during Puente program workshop showed three important themes of Puente training: ritual, routine, and language at various levels in professional development. The researcher stated the Puente training was intense, especially for teachers new to this type of training because they were not completely prepared to transfer a number of lessons

learned into the classroom. The researcher discussed the workshop processes instilled reflection, collaboration, empathy, empowerment and cultural sensitivity. The researcher went on to explain some of the exercises lead by Puente trainers encouraged teachers to be cultural sensitive, meaning prior to presenting lesson plans of new material the teacher should think about how the student might interpret or react to the new information. The writing exercises were used to practice in trying to walk in their student shoes and to help teachers to see things differently. In another exercise, teachers were asked to bring family photos, share their family among the group, then use the writing of Hispanic authors to bridge to their family. These writing exercises directed by Puente trainers were related to reflective understanding with careful attention to acknowledge student's concerns whom they are and transfer this thinking in the classroom of students in working towards improved relationship between student and teacher in academic achievement.

The researcher results from classroom observations showed the novice teachers were still acquiring skills modeled by Puente program. These teachers used trial and error process due to lack of experience, and they were more challenged to recognize the importance to be instrumental to lead students to be collaborative, students managed to gain from these novice teacher practices in learning to reflect, brainstorm, teamwork and to be more confident in improving academic achievement. The teacher, a seasoned experienced Puente teacher, showed to be more organized and knowledgeable in using the Puente practices. The researcher results from classroom observation of a seasoned Puente teacher showed the teacher challenged the students to explore their own cultural experiences in writing, this style of interaction about their own cultural experiences, helped students to feel more comfortable in asking questions and to discuss their own

work. The teacher's training in Puente program and Advance Placement courses develop tasks that connected to the student's culture and history. The researcher stated students read Latino poetry, then wrote their own poems with the idea the poems read served as an example to help the students to express meaning in their own words and develop self accomplishment of their own work.

The researcher results showed three themes: 1) professional development, 2) instructional learning, and 3) cultural identity.

Case Study 12 Description

This case study was to identify indicators that engaged high school students among immigrant and non-immigrant students of Mexican ancestry to overcome issues and improve student academic achievement. In addition, the researcher stated the research was to review three generations of high school students among immigrant and non-immigrant students of Mexican ancestry students inside one high school to better understand the generation level interest in academic achievement. The researcher's high school profile showed the proportion of student enrollment was Latino of 93.7% or approximately 2134 in total of 2,278 students.

Findings and themes.

The researcher results showed forty-two themes and the three generations expressed interest in college but, first generation high school students felt their legal status would be an impediment towards upward mobility and third generation high school students felt more conflicted in academic achievement. The research went on to state all three generations identified with their cultural identity, a strong sense of duty to the family, except the third generation showed more conflict about their ethnic identity and

goals for their future. And, females were more engaged in after-school activities and expressed more self-confidence in self-identity than males in all generations.

The researcher explained the high school participated in academic programs that helped students to be more engaged in college bound courses. The programs were Puente, MESA, and Upward Bound along with leadership clubs and activities framed to improve student learning in pre-collegiate coursework. The researcher continued to explain students from first generation lacked less engagement in extra curriculum activities because some of the student's legal status and the fear of society negativity about anti-immigration against Latino people. In the number of themes that emerged, the researcher emphasized the most recurring theme was strong network of ethnic community within the walls of the high school. The Mexican Heritage was the majority of the student body; the researcher stated the unity of one ethnic group showed a sense of connectedness and strong self-identity that underscored the value demonstrated by their high school administration, faculty members, and family members. The researcher's final analysis showed parents supported the role of the teacher and their child's school participation, but, parent's job responsibility and financial constraints were barriers to support their children to partake in school functions. Also, high school students of second generation performed the best in grade point average, state exit exams, and they were more involved in school activities which contributed to their improved academic achievement.

The researcher results showed four major themes: 1) cultural identity, 2) school programs, 3) parent involvement, and 4) collaboration.

Case Study 13 Description

Purpose.

The case study was to explore contributing factors of the high school AVID program in academic achievement among Latino student population. AVID program which changed school's policy and practices help develop greater opportunities for school's Latino population. The researcher's high school profile showed the proportion of student enrollment was Latino of 97.7% or approximately 3,287 in total of 3,365 students. In addition, the high school rigor in exceeding the AVID program 11 essential elements was awarded as a "National Demonstration School."

Findings and themes.

The researcher results showed the high school's AVID coordinator develop a school policy with the principal's approval to enroll students in high level courses with the thinking students would be exposed to higher expectations and progressively student scores would rise as more students enrolled in AP courses. The researcher explained a high number of students entered into high school below grade level. Their experience impacted how non-AVID teachers disagreed with the current policy. The researcher stated from non-AVID teachers interviews showed teachers were discouraged to teach AP courses because a number of students enrolled were below grade level. The change in policy conflicted with non-AVID teachers, former policy in the students were dropped from the course if they were unable to score grade level, the teachers felt it was not their responsibility to deal with student in learning and social issues that teachers opted out to teach AP classes.

The researcher wrote the processes of AVID practices made a positive impact of best practices into a school's curriculum and culture. AVID program was a major part of school's master schedule that changed the school's culture from low performers to high performers in overall improvement of student academic achievement. Researcher went on to explain, one of the key components that contributed to school's success was more students enrolled into college prep courses that set the bar with higher expectations for all students to be eligible to apply for four year college and university. Another key component was teachers required students to model Cornell notes for student note-taking during lectures. Cornell notes method was a way to improve note-taking of main ideas from lessons and lectures. In addition, note-taking system was to reinforce course material, to help students in studying for an exam and to develop effective learning process in complex material.

The researcher results showed professional development was major part in learning the skills to meet Latino student needs. The majority of the teachers agreed collaboration within departments learned through using AVID strategies in their content area was essential to be successful. Teachers training sessions occurred after school and days set aside to assess student data with other faculty members and to create ways into effective strategies to improve learning practices were part of the high school's culture. AVID teachers and administration worked as a team to increase awareness, they placed pressure on their shoulders in striving higher expectations for all students to form one community with the goal of transforming the high school towards positive successful school culture.

The researcher results showed two major themes: 1) professional development and 2) college preparatory curriculum.

Case Study 14 Description

Purpose.

This case study was to explore what factors influenced the math performance in academic achievement in one urban high school. The researcher's high school profile showed the proportion of student enrollment was Latino of 95.7% or approximately 3,265 in total of 3,412 students.

Findings and themes.

The researcher results showed the high school only offered two AP courses in the Math department. Latino students showed improvement in statewide tests, but the limited AP courses in core subjects reduced Latino opportunities in comparison to other high schools that offered more options of AP courses in core subjects which add an advantage to be college eligible. In how many AP courses offered was not the school's focus, the main goal was to bring students to grade level. The researcher explained the high school changed their master schedule from semester to trimester sessions which expanded class time and lessen class periods. Trimester sessions translated to longer sessions throughout the calendar year, increase focus on course material, and increase engagement to build a better relationship with the administration and faculty members. Also, the lessen course load showed students increased their focus in specific math courses with emphasis in building skills and knowledge at a quicker pace.

Results from the Math teacher interviews, the researcher wrote teachers approved of the master schedule because it provided teachers with more time to organize and

improve instructional processes. They felt the master schedule allowed additional time to assess student data, collaborate with the staff members on content area and increase professional development in training and classroom critique. This view was supported by the school's principal. Researcher results from the principal interview showed the principal was committed with a vision to serve all students needs and to prepare students with academic achievement. This commitment confirmed with their high school's philosophy and leadership which promoted a community environment of teamwork with administrative staff and teachers. The researcher explained the school's leadership roles were responsible to promote quality instruction, student engagement and higher expectations in the curriculum processes and professional development. In the case of the Math department, the Math coach leadership role, who was the architect of a math project called ALPHA instituted collaboration which reflected sharing expertise among teachers to improve quality instruction, classroom observations to provide feedback and to support student's cultural identity at the same time promote learning environment towards student excellence. From the results, the researcher stated the trimester sessions and ALPHA method were the key components to increase in student achievement.

The researcher results showed four themes: 1) leadership, 2) school's policy and master schedule, 3) professional development, and 4) flexible instruction.

Case Study 15 Description

Purpose.

This study was to identify factors that contributed to school performance among Latino female students in Continuation high school. The researcher sample consisted of six Continuation high schools that were recognized as Model high schools. The

researcher explained five of the high schools were proportionately Latino population between 64% and 83% and one high school with 42% Latino student population.

Findings and themes.

The researcher stated the Continuation high schools were designed to host a small student population, and the high schools had the flexibility to change the master schedule to meet student needs. The alternative high schools student enrollment consisted of students slightly older in age in comparison to students at traditional high schools and with high percentage of difficult past experiences in behavioral issues. The researcher's results from observations showed the Continuation high school culture showed a caring attitude that encouraged Hispanic students to feel connected with the school's culture. The high schools master schedule was modified with alternative programs that included the student's culture and language into academic learning. The researcher emphasized the small classroom size provided an environment of personal attention for teachers to operate in ways students felt connected to improve academic learning and build their skills towards high school diploma.

The researcher explained the longer the student was exposed to Continuation high school culture and classroom environment, the more students felt comfortable which showed in student's progress in academic achievement. From one of the researcher's student interviews, the researcher wrote that teachers were sensitive to their issues and showed patience in explaining coursework until they understood the material. The researcher explained students felt more comfortable in asking questions and small class size felt more like family. Results from teacher interviews, the researcher stated teachers expressed professional development was essential to sought out methods that increased

student learning. Their weekly staff meetings were important to assess student's data and collaborate with teachers to find the learning techniques necessary to encourage students in the value of academic achievement. The researcher explained most of the students lacked self-confidence and emotional issues in dealing with academic achievement were more often than students in traditional high schools. Student struggles was an important factor that affected how teachers develop classroom curriculum. The researcher went on to explain the high school's administration and teaching staff recognized students enrolled in Continuation high school come with bad memories of cultural differences and emotional stress that impact their academic achievement. In addition, the researcher stated the teachers expressed Latino students were engaged in learning and showed interest in passing their courses. The researcher stated the Continuation high school existence helped number of students graduate from high school and leave with life skills to build an opportunity to earn above minimum wage.

The researcher results showed three themes: 1) alternative programs, 2) effective instruction, and 3) student support programs.

Case Study 16 Description

Purpose.

This case study was to examine traits that contributed to school performance among high percentage of Latino students in two high achieving and two low achieving high schools. The researcher explained the high schools were proportionately Latino student population between 54% and 66%, in comparison to the Latino teaching staff of 13.8% to 17.2% in the four schools.

Findings and themes.

The researcher results showed low-achieving high schools in dropout rate were higher than the high-achieving schools and teaching staff had more extensive background in diverse experience in high-achieving high school than in low-achieving high school. In addition, high-achieving high schools suspensions and expulsions were significantly higher than in low-achieving high schools. The researcher went on to explain high schools magnet programs enrolled more Asian and Anglo-American students which lived outside of the community, and high percentage of Latino student population that lived within the community were enrolled in residential programs in high-achieving high schools. The researcher's results from teacher interviews showed mixed feelings on higher expectations for Latino students in all four high schools. In one of the two high-achieving schools with 66% Latino population and 13.9% Latino teachers, the teacher's views were clear the school's culture promoted higher expectations and encouraged students to enroll in higher level courses. However, some teacher's were concern Latino students that entered into high school behind grade level and they were pressured to enroll in higher level courses might be intimidated to continue on with their studies. From the other high-achieving high school with 54% Latino population and 15.3% Latino teachers showed high expectations were targeted to magnet programs with less consideration in residential programs where most of the Latino students were enrolled. The Science and Music teacher whom the researcher interviewed, the results showed the science teacher viewed magnet students were not lazy and they competed for each point to get a better score. Where the music teacher viewed Latino students were treated differently in standards and school's culture. The teacher continued it was clear how the

high school showed more preference in magnet programs and less support in Latino community and their culture. The researcher's observation corroborated with the music teacher's views that Latino students were treated different than non-Latino students in high expectations. But, researcher results from high school's administration and teacher survey responses reported they viewed all students were treated the same.

The four schools from researcher's results showed the difference between high and low achieving schools, the high-achieving schools were more organized in instruction and students were more involved in extracurricular activities. The researcher stated high school's success was not connected to alternative programs to improve academic achievement. In four high schools the results showed no significant data other than AVID program in one of the low-achieving high schools revealed consideration in curriculum modification or alternative programs towards a model which Latino students benefited in improved student learning. Yet, the influences from one of the high achieving schools magnet programs, Latino students scored higher than the other three high schools under study. But, the improvement was significantly below full performance in academic performance index (API) score.

The researcher results showed three themes: 1) high expectations, 2) leadership and school's culture, and 3) student's culture.

Case Study 17 Description

Purpose.

This case study was part of research group of six doctoral students and each dissertation was based on their individual merits to determine if a link exists between student engagement and academic achievement. The high school profile who the

researcher selected comprised of 81% Latino population or approximately 2,262 students out of 2,793 all students in grades 9 – 12. And, twenty-six out of 189 high school's employees were paraprofessionals whom assisted teachers in student learning.

Findings and themes.

The observation of high school's campus who the researcher observed showed school premises were clean, freshly painted walls of artwork of cheery slogans, painted by students. Researcher's results from review of documents showed positive strategies which reflected recognition of student's culture, and alternative programs to nurture students learning. The high school's programs were AVID, Preparing All Students for Success (PASS), Mentorship, and Guided Study program to focus on student needs. The researcher wrote Guided Study program was to develop to enroll ninth grade students to repeat similar courses if they failed the course in eighth grade to help students to transition into new school environment, and PASS was developed to help students in high school who was failing and needed additional tutoring to pass core courses. These programs and others were instrumental to student's high school's success and improved academic learning.

The researcher went on to explain the master schedule was designed around student weaknesses, alternative programs with three or seven classes daily for students which required longer class periods for some students to strengthen their weak areas. The high school's schedule included a morning tutorial session for students, who desired to build skills to advance in higher level in student learning or who needed extra study period to prepare for state exams. In addition, the master schedule was developed with the goal to employ as many programs necessary to keep student's engaged in academic

achievement. The master schedule in flexibility involved a mentorship program of local businesses which students worked on interim basis to get exposure and experience in a work environment. These programs listed under the master schedule, the researcher wrote the flexibility from the programs contributed to students positive influence from school's culture to build confidence in academic achievement and their academic future. Along with strong leadership from the high school's teaching staff vision to build teamwork and to problem-solve to get more connected to student issues was essential to student's academic achievement.

The researcher results showed four themes: 1) leadership, 2) master schedule flexibility, 3) effective teaching strategies, and 4) high school's positive culture.

Case Study 18 Description

Purpose.

This case study was in conjunction with a California University thematic research group of ten doctoral students. Each case study was based on their individual merits to gain a better understanding what factors contribute to student achievement. The high school who the researcher selected was proportionate Latino population of 79% in comparison to 17.3% of Latino teaching staff.

Findings and themes.

The observation of high school's campus who the were on career programs such as; nursing assistant, food safety, and automotive researcher observed explained the school campus was clean, secured and appearance of family-like environment. The high school documents reviewed, the researcher stated alternative programs repair funded through a grant from the California partnership academy. The programs were created to

help students earn certification of specific profession and prepare them for the workforce after high school graduation. From the teacher's interviews, the researcher wrote teachers were concerned about student's focus on career programs which redirects student's attention away from advance core courses, and student successes outside of college preparation and commitment to college or university eligible. But, teachers agreed the student learning in their chosen career program, and senior project of accumulation of learning from previous school years was the foundation of their self-confidence, positive attitude, and respect of self-identity shown on high school's state tests. And, the leadership of department chairs were responsible to schedule meeting with the teaching staff for the purpose of re-examine student's data, an in-depth discussion of the student's strengths and weaknesses, to seek the best strategies to meet student needs. This collaboration of department teams and administrative staff support were key components in student's academic achievement.

In the results from the assistant principal's interview, the researcher explained the assistant principal's role was the point of contact to be engaged in resolving community issues, and it was teacher's role to encourage students to be involved in community programs. The researcher reported that the time spent with the school's principle the researcher explained the principal and assistant principals made efforts in visiting classrooms on daily basis. The principle reported the administration staff worked closely with the teaching staff and students. The principal stated the high school positive culture, caring attitude with zero tolerance in student's behavior were a few examples that show the main attributes to student's success. The researcher's responses from teacher surveys reported student's spent less than one hour daily on their homework, and approximately

twenty-five percent students spent time involved in after school activities. In addition, over fifty percent of students did not work for pay after school.

The researcher results showed three themes: 1) high school's culture and philosophy, 2) leadership and 3) curriculum and instruction.

Case Study 19 Description

Purpose.

This case study was cohort of eleven doctoral students and each dissertation was based on their individual merits to explore what best practices and policies influenced math performance in high performing urban high school. The high school who the researcher selected was proportionate Latino population of 61.9% or approximately 1,594 of 2,577 student population in grades 9 – 12.

Findings and themes.

Results from questionnaires on school's policy and school design who the researcher distributed to school's administration and teaching staff showed nearly all teachers agreed state test requirements influenced the high school to take action which initiated new strategies towards improved state and nationwide tests. In addition, the Math teachers agreed the leadership and teamwork were key component in student's improved test scores. Results from Math department chair who the researcher interviewed stated the department chair believed the direct push from state requirements helped the department to develop alternative programs to meet different levels of learning towards full performance for all math students. The chair's leadership role collaborated with other math teachers to change their vision in leadership and responsibility between teachers and students. The Math chair explained experienced Math teachers worked as a team in

mentoring new math teachers, and appoint leadership roles to fill positions in curriculum specialists, and coaches. In addition, the teachers shifted responsibility to students in math content area to increase the student's awareness on their weaknesses and to work with the teacher in how to improve test scores and academic learning.

The researcher stated the current principal discussed the former long-time principal now retired was responsible for policy and practices that impacted the math department funding and policies that conflict with current funding constraints. The principal explained during the former principal leadership the funding was available to help to pay for resources to purchase supplies and materials for use of ceremonies and other activities in showing support of student achievement. The teacher's interviews responded to the new changes that they use their own personal time and resources to maintain practices which supported student's increased in improving math scores. The researcher stated teachers were committed to student's success. Teacher's worked collaborative in assessing student grades, monitored classroom performance, and reports to better understand how to deal with student's learning ability. Students that scored below grade level, teachers sought out alternatives methods in instructional learning to bring the students to full performance.

The researcher results from the interviews and questionnaires showed proven results in Latino student population where Latino students out performed in statewide test scores, as well as, English Learners, majority Latino students, outperformed among their peers in statewide test scores. Latino student's outperformed district and state average level test scores, and above Asian students state average test scores at their high school, the advancement was still below Asian student state average state scores. The researcher

continued to state the high school showed strong leadership in the math department, caring attitude towards student learning, extensive support in afterschool and weekend math sessions to bring student's to full performance, and open communication in sharing the best practices to meet student's needs.

The researcher results showed four themes: 1) leadership, 2) teamwork and collaboration, 3) effective instruction, and 4) improved test scores.

Case Study 20 Description

Purpose.

This case study was to identify leadership and teaching practices linked to student achievement in high performing, high-poverty rural high schools. The high school's student population was proportionately Latino population between 36% and 95% in three rural high schools. In high school's teaching staff ethnicity comprised of zero to 27% Latino ethnicity.

Findings and themes.

The researcher results from observations and interviews in three rural high schools showed three consistent contributors to school-wide success in each high school: 1) clear and direct focus on instruction, strong leadership, 2) flexible alternative programs formal and informal in high expectations and caring teachers; and 3) multiple support systems.

The results from the high school with the lowest Latino student population of 35% and zero Latino teachers were challenged in dealing with the Latino growth within the community and high school enrollment. The teaching staff expressed the change in growth expressed mix feelings between cultural discrimination and tolerance. This high

school's past history experienced high expectations and met full performance to state average test scores and high percentage of students were enrolled in advance core courses. The researcher explained rural area reflected shared support in high school activities and high expectations for students to enroll in college prep courses. Yet, the researcher expressed the community and high school was not quite engaged in connecting with the Latino community. Student support in after school and added tutorial sessions were essential elements for underperformers to progress to full performance.

Results from the high school Latino student population of 77% in comparison to 20% Latino teaching staff was under the Improvement Program for underperformers. In high school observations, the researcher wrote contributed factors that improved academic improvement were caring, leadership organization, higher expectations for all students, clean and safe school, and quality teachers. From this high school, the researcher results showed most of the teacher participants expressed positive remarks in the school's culture in policy and standards in dress code, school attendance and student's achievement. They felt the leadership and networking with the community contributed to student's success. The researcher stated Latino students failed advanced math courses, the experience helped their self-esteem in attempting to achieve to a high level in learning. Support systems formal and informal were created to intervene in areas where students required further instruction to strengthen their weak areas. Results from Principal and Assistant Principal's interviews showed their leadership enforced classroom observations, professional development and open communication among the school's staff.

In the third high school with Latino student population of 95% and 60% of all student population were reported as English Language Learners, and the high school profile included 27% of all teaching staff were Latino teachers. Formerly, placed under Improvement program the high school was forced to make major changes in policy and curriculum. The researcher results from documents and interviews, the researcher stated before high school was removed from the improvement program, the district leadership, and school board were involved in power struggles which impacted student's academic achievement. This changed after the new Superintendent made major changes in positive directions which improved curriculum structure at school level with doubts by parents still felt uneasy with the district school's decision making. Another conflict occurred between the school board and Superintendent, the Superintendent accepted another position. The changes at district level, the community support focused on the high school's leadership. Results from the principal's interview, the researcher wrote the principal reached out to the community, attended other high performing high schools to better understand how to meet student needs, and supported teachers in ways to improve student's learning. The high school challenges were student entered high school several years behind in grade level.

However, the principal thinking was not completely consistent with some of the teacher's views in student achievement. From results from the teacher interviews, the researcher received mixed messages in student achievement. Some teachers were unprepared in methods to bring students up to full performance and few teachers viewed students were lazy, with the idea the students did not want to learn. The teachers shifted the responsibility to students in after school programs. Students were given the choice to

work together with minimum teaching staff to assist after school or continue with same routine with little results. The principal and teaching staff offered them a facility, adult tutors, and course materials for after school learning.

The presentation encouraged seniors to start study groups, mentor students at a lower grade levels, and collaborate with the adult tutors to develop student strategies to improve test scores. The students were proud of their accomplishments and they were aware their efforts made a difference in student average test scores. Their discipline and interest made a difference in student average test scores. Student ingenuity and leadership changed teacher's perception of Latino student's ability in learning and made a difference in building a relationship between teacher and student. However, all students did not meet grade level but advanced number of grade levels in short period of time. The researcher wrote some students entered into high school in reading at second grade level and graduated in reading with eighth grade level. Even though the student did not meet grade level, the principal and teaching staff viewed the progress a significant accomplishment in short period of time and they were encouraged to continue with alternative programs to increase student achievement.

The researcher results showed three themes: 1) leadership, 2) alternative programs and direct instruction, and 3) student and teacher relationship.

Case Study 21 Description

Purpose.

The case study was to examine the cultural norms, school's practices which contributed to academic achievement in urban high school. The high school student

population was proportionately Latino population of 88% or approximately 2,220 and 278 English Language Learners of total 2,523 students.

Findings and themes.

Results from school's campus, whom the researcher observed stated the classroom walls were covered with posters of the school vision, phrases of reminders for the student's to reflect on college requirements, copies of social contracts signed by the students, and small area open to display student's work. Specific themes written on posters and hints in test taken were posted in each classroom. From the teacher interviews the researcher wrote the teachers explained the positive results connected to a specific program called Capturing Kids Hearts (CKH), which consists of techniques to make students feel welcome inside the classroom. They mentioned PUENTE, and AVID programs were designed to prepare students to be eligible to apply for college. However, the researcher pointed out teachers was more ready to discuss CKH program. The program objective was to make student's feel welcome in the classroom. The teacher explained teacher's welcome student's by shaking their hands at the door while the student enters into the classroom. Another characteristic the researcher wrote, a social contract where a student was required to set the terms, sign the contract. If a student was non-compliant with the contract, the teachers agreed the student would be assigned temporarily to another teacher that taught the same subject and level. The teacher explained the students would rather uphold the social contract than change classes.

In teacher interview results, the researcher showed that teachers expressed large class size with students behind grade level and emotional issues created a classroom culture which presented challenges to instruct with proven results. The teachers felt the

usage of Cornell note-taking, present examples to help students understand the material, and point out common mistakes in problem solving contributed to student improvement in test scores. In addition, small class size was offered for students to get special attention to strengthen their learning ability. If student' still required further assistance or student's grade below C, the student's were required to attend tutorial sessions. Teachers felt a key component to achieve student success was to identify student needs and to understand student issues that might prevent the student to succeed.

Results from observations, the researcher stated the teaching staff professional development interests were to recognize student needs, increase student self-awareness, and strategies in specific programs to improve teaching skills and student achievement. The teachers training were based on conferences, staff meetings, and academic language tools. The researcher communicated the factors that contributed to academic achievement were positive school culture and vision in closing the achievement gap, strong leadership shared among administration and teaching staff, teacher collaboration for alternative instructional practices, and professional development in curriculum and instruction.

Researcher's results showed four themes: 1) leadership, 2) collaboration and teamwork, 3) teacher and student relationship and 4) effective instruction.