

Running Head: BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

Building Knowledge:
Exploring the Chicano/Latino Undergraduate Narrative of
Academic Success in Higher Education

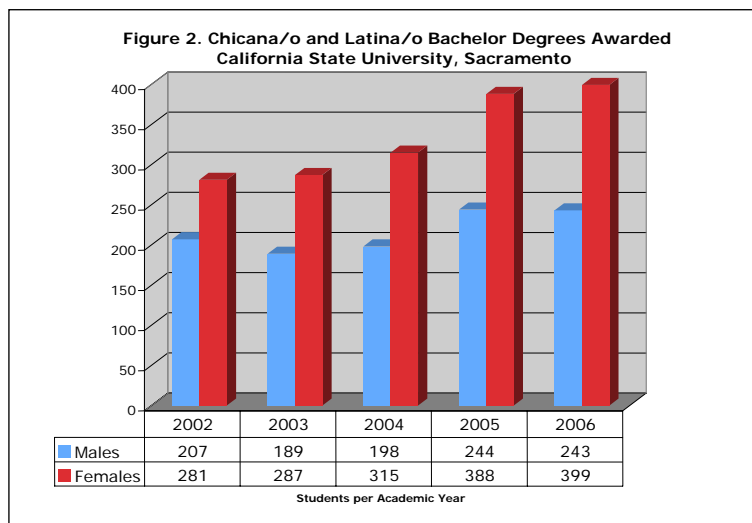
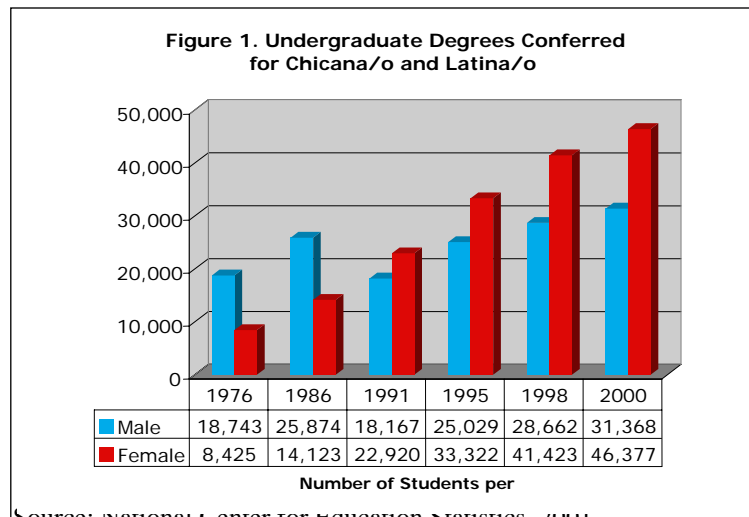
Julie López Figueroa, Ph.D.

Serna Center Scholar-in-Residence
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California State University, Sacramento

Introduction

Understanding the gender shift among Latina/o undergraduates in higher education over the last twenty years remains a challenge (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997, 2001). Nationally, Latinas appear to be enrolling and graduating at a higher rate than Latino undergraduates, the literature has yet to account for this gender shift. The figures below illustrate the nation and local trends regarding degrees conferred, specifically, California State University, Sacramento reflects a similar trend (Office of Institutional Research, 2007).



Outside the boundaries comparative discussions of Chicano/Latino undergraduates relative to other minority and non-minority groups (Chacón, Cohen, & Strover, 1986; Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, & Rhee, 1997; Moreno, 2000; Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000) and their female

counterpart (Gándara, 1995), these partial renderings are not enough to comprehensively understand Chicano/Latino experiences. Yet, there is a strong insistence to construct explanations around gender difference and schooling by operating on the assumption that enough information exists to engage in a comparative analysis in the first place, and/ or that comparative analyses will undoubtedly increased information. However, comparative studies potentially broker essentialist or monolithic interpretations, rather than gaining understanding the particularities of being Chicano/Latino in higher education (Barajas & Pierce, 2001; Smith, Morrison, & Wolf, 1994).

Centering student narratives demands an ethical response to not impose an analytical gender lens but to prioritize issues they identified as taking precedents. Gender was not ignored in this study; however, it was the primary lens of analysis in this effort to explore student narrative. Additionally, omitting the language of resiliency as important because that body of knowledge does not allow for a critical examination of systemic mechanism that need to be held accountable (Trueba, 1988, 1991), thus suggesting that institutions are powerless against individuals.

Working from a perspective that academic success is a socially mediated experience (Figuroa, 2006; Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Phelan, Davidson, & Cao; Rendón, 2006), this study centers student perception to highlight those social factors students identified as informing their academic outlook, practice, and discourse. Because Gándara (2005) suggests that high achievers are often more vulnerable than those student who do not attain a K-16 education, student narratives can potentially highlight the kind of vulnerabilities Chicano/Latino males confront as they pursue higher education. This study places emphasis on the social interactions taking place on and off campus that comprehensively mediate the degree to which all students perceive and experience equal access to opportunities for academic success to pursue higher education (Portillo, Rowan, & Andrews-Guillen, 2003; Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela; Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003).

The study draws on research in the areas of diversity and higher education, campus climate, men and schooling, and theories of academic success to achieve the following goals. First, providing a brief overview on the schooling conditions of higher education places into context how first generation Latino students are treated according to the literature. Second, a discussion of existing theories brings into focus the way students negotiate and navigate at micro levels inciting academic success. Third, a discussion on gender and higher education draws serious attention to building a greater body of knowledge to account for a Latino male narrative. Fourth, this study highlights some survey and case study data to uncover the academic discourse and perception of Latinos. Finally, the findings will outline potential areas for further research in the long term, and in the short would like to provide a set of policy considerations. With these objectives in mind, the study primarily seeks to address two questions: What is the academic narrative and practice of Latino undergraduates at Sacramento State? What were some broader experiences students identified as significant in the construction of that narrative? The goal was to have students identify factors that mattered most as they galvanized actions to create their academic success at Sacramento State. To appreciate this study, it is important to bring into perspective the larger discussions occurring in higher education regarding the experience of first generation, Chican@/Latin@ students in 4 year institutions.

Literature Review

Diversity in Higher Education: Schooling Conditions Confronting Minority Students

Like other social institutions, higher education is a cultural context with its unique set of practices, traditions, norms, and language. This paper does not participate in the debate of whether institutional racism exists, but instead takes that position that institutional racism can no longer be dismissed as one inherited component to an institution of higher education given the amount of research (Altbach, 1991; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton, & Allen, 1998; Pincus, 2000; Solorzano, 1997; Sue, 2003, 2004, 2005; Tatum, 1997; Yosso, 2005). Rather than spending efforts targeting the point of origin or placing blame on any one person/people, it is important to understand that institutional racism permeates all aspects of interaction within the academic affairs of an institution like so many other aspects of society. While much of the literature on diversity in higher education is examined within the context of predominantly White institutions, those discussions deserve attention to avoid any kind of assumptions about what it means to have diversity on one of the most diverse campuses in the California State University system. At best, this literature openly invites reflection on campus culture and its practices to identify what is being done well and what may still need improvement.

Structural Discrimination: Institutional Racism and Higher Education

Detecting institutional racism can be particularly difficult given that it is entrenched within what would be considered a “normal routine” (Sue, 2004; 2005), Sue (2004) explains that what is taken for granted as normal routine actually veils racism and, therefore, becomes an unquestioned practice. Institutional racism relies on the contribution of unexamined attitudes and practices to remain undetectable, transformative in nature, and resilient (Knowles & Prewitt, 1969; Miles, 1989; Pincus, 1994; Sue, 2005). In other words, “We unintentionally enable and empower racism by making it invisible” (Sue, 2005, p. 106). Because civil rights movements sternly challenged institutional discrimination, most well-intentioned people assume that discrimination overall no longer exists. However, when people contest or examine institutional racism, hopefully this action can at some point be viewed not solely as the end result of something wrong but more so offer insight into what still needs attention.

Institutional racism is a social system that privileges some members while disadvantaging others (Sedlacek & Glenwood, 1976). Sedlacek and Brooks (1976) suggest that institutional racism in higher education requires a responsive climate that includes:

1. Biased admission standards result in fewer minority students on the nation’s campuses
2. Faculty members have low expectations of minority student performance
3. Most student activities are organized primarily for whites
4. Most counselors are not knowledgeable about minority students’ problems and concerns
5. There are only limited course offerings that are relevant to minority students
6. Few minority personnel are in key decision-making roles
7. Programs for minority students tend to be understaffed and underfunded
8. Schools must commit little of their own funds to minority student programs. (p. 50-61)

These criteria translate institutional racism into the practice of gatekeeping and brokering resources and opportunities for some students and not for others (Hurtado, Haney, & Garcia,

1998). Certainly, institutions of higher education are working hard to make vast improvements for racial minorities but there are some serious cultural challenges to genuinely address in order to strengthen the advancement of current efforts.

Because institutional racism is a form of discrimination, Pincus (1994) insists that it is important to understand that discrimination comes primarily in two different forms. Jim Crow Laws are the most common form of institutional discrimination, whereas merit exhibits structural discrimination. Institutional discrimination occurs when “policies of the dominant race/ethnic/gender institutions and the behavior of individuals who control these institutions and implement policies...are intended to have a differential and/or harmful effect on minority race/ethnic/gender groups” (Pincus, 1994, p. 31). Structural discrimination “refers to the policies of dominant race/ethnic/gender institutions and the behavior of the individuals who implement these policies and control these institutions, which are race/ethnic/gender neutral in intent but which have a differential and/or harmful effect on minority race/ethnic/gender groups” (Pincus, 1994, p. 31). While social reform drastically improved race relations, research in higher education evidences the presence of structural discrimination. Concepts like internalized oppression (Tatum, 1997), racial formation (Omi & Winant, 1994), racial microaggression (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000), Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1997), and White privilege (McIntosh, 1989) reveal how unexamined ideology and practice work together to formulate varied iterations of institutional racism.

Merit: An Institutional Culture and Practice

The concept of merit supports structural discrimination in that it allows institutional racism to lead a pardoned and quiet existence. Most notably, merit gives the appearance that higher education institutions operate from a “color-blind” perspective thus fostering the assumption that standards of fairness are at work (Sue, 2004). In this way, merit, according to Sue (2004), outlines the myth that individuals “who are successful in life are more competent, capable, intelligent, and motivated. Those who fail to achieve in society are less capable, intelligent, and motivated” (p.767). In this way, policy and practice are not always synchronized. This perspective oversimplifies merit while at the same time conveniently denies the roles of “privilege and favoritism” (Sue, 2004, p. 767). On this note, it is worth mentioning that practitioners and administrative bodies that set policies can work counterintuitive to one another with regards to merit. Practitioners who are mindful of best teaching practices promote creating learning communities, civic engagement through service learning, or systems of accountability through grading rubrics or peer grading often works counter to merit. On some level best teaching practices can challenge, if not interrupt the manner in which institutional racism invalidate some experiences over others, particularly those that do not coincide with the experiences of Whites in privileged positions, for instance (Sue, 2003). In this way, forging a stronger relationship between policy and practice becomes more crucial to provide the best quality education to all students.

While merit is discussed and treated within institutions as if it were an independent, neutral and objective vehicle for governing and socializing college students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1997; Solorzano, 1997), Delgado Bernal (1999) reminds us that merit is “socially constructed and standards of competition are set by those in power” (p. 95). Merit is one of the

best functioning social constructions impeding the progress of providing an equitable education as it continues to make higher education an increasingly exclusive.

Campus Climate: Faculty and Student Views on Diversity in Higher Education

There is an unspoken assumption that working in a diverse environment means that all members within that contexts are comfortable with diversity. The truth is that many Americans are not at ease with diversity (Garcia, 2001). Without authentic and meaningful efforts to integrate diversity, diversity on campus merely signals progressive attitudes to co-exist and at the same time compromises any real efforts to make diversity an integral element of the institution. According to Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002), this structural diversity, or increasing numbers of minority students on predominantly White campus, will not solely improve the frequency and quality of intergroup relations. Thus, inviting diversity to exist loosely on a campus reflects a lack of preparedness by administrators, faculty and staff to understand the significant impact and meaning of a growing diverse student body.

While people may not always act out what they believe that does not mean that personal beliefs do not inform the way people do their jobs at the university on some level (Schaefer, 2005). There seems to be a greater willingness to participate in discussions of race as long as the discussion remains impersonal and ethereal (Tatum, 1997). When conversations entail taking personal stock of one's personal accountability to the issue, those conversations seem to come across as threatening one's personal and intellectual livelihood. For example, Altbach (1991) noted that White liberal faculty even expressed resistance "to structural and curricular changes aimed at reducing racial tensions on campus" (p. 5) because it seemingly appeared to water down scholarship. Norman and Norman (1995) suggest that all, but especially white faculty "need to examine their ideas concerning their own academic socialization and how that socialization process has interacted with their social and cultural background, and how these ideas have affected their beliefs and assumptions with regard to teaching and learning in multicultural environments" (p. 134). A glimpse across different academic disciplines gives the impression that any valued scholarship worth studying is primarily produced by European and/or White male scholars (Botstein, 1991).

Unchecked beliefs by faculty, White faculty in particular, often culminate into the kind of interactions that result in students of color to either never attend the office hours prior to graduating or never return after their first visit due to negative interactions (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Steward, Gimenez, & Jackson, 1995; Tettegah, 1997). Additionally, some research indicates that White faculty may hold the belief that students from certain racial/ethnic groups are more competent than others (Steward, Gimenez, & Jackson, 1995; Noel & Smith, 1996; Tettegah, 1996). Without some consideration of one's own beliefs, members unknowingly and unintentionally offer collective consent to an ideology and practice that perpetuates institutional racism (Knowles & Prewitt, 1969; Pincus, 1994). It is not a question of intent as much as it is of continued outcomes for racial minority students.

While hiring a diverse faculty can improve the experience of diverse student bodies (Rinn, 1997), Verdugo (1995) believes structural mechanisms position Latino faculty as well as other minority faculty in powerless positions within a department such that they find themselves overloaded with work solely related to diversity issues. The root of this powerlessness, according to Verdugo (1995) perhaps is tied to the widely held perception that "...Hispanic

faculty lack the skills that would allow them to flourish in academe, a lack of objectivity in their research, and that the research topics they pursue are irrelevant or marginally important” (p. 671). To this end, Hurtado, Carter, and Spuler (1996) suggest that to effectively resolve the overall status of underrepresented students in higher education student perspectives must be more carefully examined as a way to gain insight about what actually sustains students in school despite an unwelcoming schooling environment.

Studies on student achievement suggest that diversity raises the intellectual bar, yet White students may not always intermingle beyond the classroom with students of color because they are not viewed as intellectually viable resources (Altbach, 1991; Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Gurin et al., 2002). In the absence of deliberate measures to integrate diversity, a diverse presence on campus becomes vulnerable to marginalization and being excluded from being equal participants within higher education (Loo & Rolison, 1986). In college where group work in class or study groups are vital resources, first generation college students will experience college very different than those students that take for granted they have unquestionable access to groups and other campus resources. Scholars like Alva and Padilla (1995), Eimer and Pike (1997), Castellanos (1996), and Vasquez’s (1979) suggest that an “all -white environment of a university institution may be so different and oppressive . . . the lack of “fit” may result in the “culture shock” phenomenon which results in isolation and alienation” (p. 149). As opposed to students who are able to find support “successfully negotiated the physical, social, and cognitive geographies on campus had significantly higher social adjustment and attachment to the institution” (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996, p. 152).

The harsh but uncompromising truth about institutional racism is that it cannot exist, be covertly practiced, or become enabled without the participation of a human source. It is not a matter of personal intent but more it is about question of institutional practices that are viewed as traditional or common (Sue, 2004). This information was shared to develop social awareness and either encourage or applaud individuals who have taken the time to understand that institutional conditions inform student perception to mediate student performance. To diffuse essentialist interpretations on any part of the previous discussion thus far, it is important to say that White allies can be found amongst faculty/staff and students. Assumptions about people being put off to direct discussions about racial diversity and racism need to be over turned (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). And, it is equally true that not all faculty/staff of color are allies in the struggle for academic excellence through equal access. The previous discussion places emphasis on finding out how academic success and racial climate influences schooling experiences. This discussion is also meant to also plant a seed of curiosity to ponder what some students come to negotiate in their academic lives in order to achieve academic success despite feeling alienated and unwelcome in the process.

While institutions reevaluate policies and practices in response to enrollment and graduation rates, racially diverse students unpack these numbers to voice feelings of racial hostility, isolation, and recipients of some kind of differential treatment along the lines of retention. These voices are directed in the hopes of creating more effective retention practices and policies. To better synchronize institutional effectiveness and student academic success, this study aligns itself with discussions that acknowledge that purposefully positioning students to equally access opportunities increases the chances of academic excellence.

Academic Theories and Academic Practices

This section prompts the reader to consider the ways academic success is a socially mediated experience where a student may steward their education journey, and also rely on the quality of interactions between social, cognitive, and institutional factors (Swail, Reed, & Perna, 2003). While academic preparedness may inform the quality of the experiences for minority students, there is another story where academic preparedness plays a smaller role. If the overall goal for scholars and practitioners in higher education is to provide the highest quality education for all students, then examining academic success from a student perspective, especially minorities according to the literature, can shed light on those experiences where academic preparedness is not the dominating issue.

Rendón (2006) suggests that we must consider academic success as the manifestation of a series of negotiations that traverse a variety of social contexts prior to become an outcome within institutions of higher education. In other words, academic success may not exclusively be primed in higher education but collectively supported from other areas of students' lives (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1993; Figueroa, 2006; Figueroa & Garcia, 2006; Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Rendón, 2006). Supportive networks serve as important buffers to reduce and/or prevent feelings of isolation and alienation when there is a lack of "fit" between the schools and student's value systems (Eimers & Pike, 1997; McGlynn, 1997; Montero-Seibirth, 1996; Vasquez, 1979). Ideally, faculty and mentors from these supportive networks, but sometimes students turn to family and friends who many not always know anything about college for support (Chiang, Hunter & Yeh, 2004). Scholars argue that assimilation does not lead to academic success but rather increases the stress making it challenging for students to succeed (Barajas & Pierce, 2001). The interpretation of the relationship between context and academic performance may vary, but what cannot be dismissed is that context and relationships matter in the discussion of academic success.

Even when students manage to succeed as discussed by Achor and Morales (1990), we cannot afford to assume that academic excellence by a student prohibits them from feeling alienated and unwelcomed (Hurtado, 1994). According to Loo and Rolison (1986), "Although academic excellence in curriculum, programs, and teaching and accessible or supportive faculty contribute to satisfaction with the academic institution, ethnic minority students can still feel socioculturally alienated" (p. 72). For the most part, when it comes to underrepresented, first generation students, predominantly White institutions, especially, seem to undervalue minorities despite having programs geared towards anticipating the students' needs of a diversifying population (Figueroa & Garcia, 2006; Gonzalez, 2002; Loo & Rolison, 1986).

Studies that center the Latina/o student experience gain a greater approximation to understand the realities of schooling. By centering student perceptions within this discussion (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; Swail, Reed, & Perna, 2003), Latino scholars (Achor & Morales; Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Gonzalez, 2002; Yosso, 2005) in the area of higher education are making critical contributions to contest, create, and insert frameworks to situate discussions of academic success beyond the limiting traditional analytic practices and discourses. Examining the nature of academic success for Latinos in higher education means learning more about students' perceptions regarding what constitutes opportunity structures and resources. Academic success represents more than mastering study skills, time management, participating in study groups, doing homework, taking exams, writing drafts, and reading textbooks. The more

we know about the way first-generation students do schooling, the more academic success seems to be defined too narrowly (Rendón, 2006) Researchers also suggest that what students do to academically succeed may seem counterintuitive to institutional expectations. Does academic success as defined by the institution parallel consider the experiences that students confront in order to be academically successful?

Theories on Academic Success

According to the literature, participation strategies employed by Latina/o students in higher education explain how marginal students academically excel in spite of feeling marginalized as well as contend with educational barriers. Not only do these theories shed light on the way students navigate and negotiate to attain academic success, but they also highlight how academic success is a socially embedded activity that includes more than individual effort, academic know-how, and means pushing back on a learning environment. Most often, these theories are utilized for first generation college students.

Resistance with Accommodation. Achor and Morales' (1990) challenged paradigms that pathologically portrayed Latinas who attained a postsecondary education. Achor and Morales found that Latina doctoral students enacted *resistance with accommodation* as a means to do well in school. Specifically, this mode of participation in higher education "rejects and challenges existing power relationships but accepts the institutionally approved means of attaining educational advancement" (Achor & Morales, 1990, p. 281). Similarly, Hurtado (1994) found that one of the strategies used by minority students means not participating in all "mainstream activities that are characteristic of the typical models that include academic and social integration" (p. 347). Hurtado (1994) emphasizes the point that "students develop strategies to maintain feelings of self-worth in adverse racial climates" (p. 347). Supportive networks serve as important buffers to reduce and/or prevent feelings of isolation and alienation when there is a lack of "fit" between the schools and students value systems (Castellanos, 1996; McGlynn, 1997; Montero-Seibirth, 1996; Saunders & Serna, 2004; Vasquez, 1979). Even though this does not explain how students sustain or mitigate their presence within the institution, it begs for greater understanding about influence of off-campus non-academic activities or relationships that positively sustain students in higher education (Cabrera, Nora, & Casteñeda, 1993).

Network Analytic Framework. Stanton-Salazar's (1997) theory succinctly deconstructs the different tenants that create social capital. This framework draws attention to the systematic way in which ideology and socialization are practiced and operated by institutional agents (teachers, counselors, teacher aides and other school affiliates) to insure the academic prosperity of some students and the demise of others; it is not a question of intent as much as it is of a consistent outcome. Network Analytic Framework proves to be helpful in understanding the distinct experiences of both successful and unsuccessful students.

Social scientists like Stanton-Salazar (1997) and Phelan, Davidson, and Yu (1993) suggest that school ideologies and practices are informed by a culture informed by white, middle class values. Specifically, scholars believe that students from this similar background are born into a life of "privilege" where home and school cultures share the same language and behavior (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Because home and school cultural strongly mirror one another,

sometimes students and institutional agents do not see anything different from their “ordinary” and “normal” behavior. Stanton-Salazar (1997) believes this kind of social capital allows a segment of society to gain “...the resources, privileges, and support necessary to advance and maintain their economic and political position in society” (p. 6). By gaining institutional support, minority student’s ability to decode translates into academic success represents the “development of various abilities to participate effectively in multiple cultural worlds” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 22). Unable to decode, marginalized students internalize the myth about academic success being the result of merit versus access to resources and opportunities. Stanton-Salazar one some level recognizes human choice, whether conscious or unconscious, as being the energy source for the way institutions contribute to particular outcomes.

By drawing attention to the issue of brokering relationship with institutional agents, there is a dual analysis that can be done on understanding the experiences of students who do well in school. This framework provides a means to understand academic failure as systemic exclusion and academic success as strategic alliance. Either through mentoring by a teacher, guidance counselor, some school official or friendships with white, middle class children, minority students strengthen their ability to access necessary information that will allow them to successfully function within the schooling contexts. The social dynamics that create and sustain academic achievement interrogates individual achievement being the cause of success or failure.

The aforementioned theories on academic success raise a sense of curiosity and, more importantly, challenges the ongoing manner in which individualism continues to be the popular manner in which academic success is still conceptualized. While it is incredibly helpful to know what contributing factors increase the likelihood of academic success such as family support, mentoring relationships, peer support groups (Nora, Cabrera, Hagedorn, Pascarella, 1996; Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000), and same race peer networks (Villalpando, 2003), these are not just factors but revealing social and cultural processes responding to schooling conditions. However, the question still remains, what is the academic experience of Latino males in their journey to attain academic success.

Men and Schooling

In terms of mainstream literature, the male experience in education is discussed within a comparative perspective between men and women. Sadker, Sadker, Fox and Salata (2000) found that, “male students interact more with the teacher but at all levels of schooling they receive a higher quality of interaction” (p. 213). This educational advantage exists because boys claim a “greater share of the teacher’s time and attention” (p. 213). Sadker, Sadker, Fox and Salata (2000) believe the following four experiences exist for women in their elementary education through graduate school: teachers give them less attention and feedback, they talk less than their male counterpart, the curricula neglects to incorporate the contributions of women, and lastly, there is the element of sexual harassment. Canada and Pringle (2000) believe these conditions, particularly at the college level, render women to be treated as second class citizens.

Specifically at the college level, Sadker, Sadker, Fox and Salata (2000) suggest that men control the environment in terms of attaining leadership roles on campus and/or perhaps participate in sports that seems to never lack funding. Men are usually portrayed as the beneficiaries of an educational system. Connell (1993) recognizes the complexity surrounding masculinity and schooling. We cannot take for granted that men are always favored within a

given institution since on one end we see masculinity supported and fostered in institutions of learning and on the other end we also recognize instances in which boys resist schooling (Connell, 1993). Connell (1993) believes these two oppositional outcomes are due to the “active process of construction, occurring in a field of power relations that are often tense and contradictory, and often involving negotiation of alternative ways of being masculine (p. 193). More specifically power refers to social power. “Social power in terms of access to higher education, entry to professions, command of communication, is being delivered by the school system to boys who are academic ‘success’...”(p. 197). The differentiation of masculinities is not simply a question of individual difference emerging or individual paths being chosen. “It is a collective process, something that happens at the level of the institution and in the organization of peer group relationships” (Connell, 1993, p. 197). Connell’s point about differentiating masculinities is important to breaking ground on the experiences of Latino men in higher education (Mirandé, 1998) and facet an experience that speaks to the influences within the institution that impact academic success. By centering student perception, in this way, is the main source from which scholars are not only gaining insight to generate more accurate theories but also a reference point by which current theories are being critiqued. As stated before, the view that academic success is socially mediated calls forth a brief discussion on the impact that context can have on the way students experience higher education

Method

Using mixed-methods, data gathered from an online survey and case studies compose a profile of perceptions and practices of the Chicano/Latino male undergraduates here at Sacramento State. Data presented here represent preliminary findings from exploratory study designed to understand the experiences of Latino male undergraduates, specifically how do these students insure their academic prosperity in higher education. The purpose of this study is two-fold: a) to uncover challenges and schooling experiences in higher education, and b) to identify the kinds of perceptions students that informed their participation within an institution of higher education.

Participants

The majority (56.4%) were between the ages of 20-23 years. Mexican was the preferred ethnic label by 46.2% of participants. Most students (87.2%) identified themselves as having full time student status indicated being seniors (39.5%, n= 15), Graduating Seniors (34.2%, n=13), and juniors (26.3%). Nearly half of the students (48.7%, n = 19) transferred from a community college while others were either re-entry (34.2%, n= 3), or came directly from high school (43.6%, n = 17). Financially, parents according to students (55%= 20) earned between \$15,000-\$44,999 per year. Approximately, 56.4% (n =) of students were born in the United States but had immigrant parents. In terms of language use, 92. 3% (n= 36) of students speak both English and Spanish. As for family, 53.6% (n = 21) of participants were middle children in their family while 33.3% (n = 13) reported being the oldest sibling.

Instruments

Online Survey

The study was announced and dispersed to a variety of student organizations along with social and academic programs through email. The recruitment letter was attached through the email. All participants were told that no inducements would be offered for participation. Also, participants were reminded their efforts were strictly voluntary and students could withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty. The recruitment letter explained the purpose and the general procedures of the study to potential participants. Once participants contacted me via email, a web link was provided for them to access the online survey.

As the Serna Center Scholar-in-Residence recipient for this academic year, I utilized the subscription established by the Serna Center for Survey Monkey to create an online survey to gather and collect data. The online gathered demographic background information on Chicano/Latino students as well as their perceptions and attitudes about schooling. For the online survey, participants were asked to fill out online consent forms. These consent forms downloaded, printed destroyed. While the first part of the survey gathered demographic information using open-ended questions, the remainder of the survey provided a series of questions using a Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree) relation to their educational experience (Educational Outcome Measure), self-esteem (Self Esteem Measure Multigroup), ethnic identity (Ethnic Identity Measure), academic practices (Academic Practice Measure), and social engagement (Social Engagement Outlook Measure).

With a 120 questions, the amount of data demands more time for analysis than one year. The discussion in this report highlights some finding from the survey. Whereas the online survey captured a broader number of participants (N= 38), case studies (N= 8) were conducted to capture the more personal experiences of participants who met the criteria for the overall study, specifically, first generation-college student, identifies as Chicano and/or Latino, senior or graduating senior, and full-time status. Data were collected from the online survey and case studies during the Spring of 2007 while the literature review was developed in Fall 2006.

Case Studies

As for individual interviews, participants who filled out the survey could also indicate whether they wanted to be interviewed. While students were contacted, 8 students consistently attended scheduled interviews. Unlike surveys, interviews relied on open-ended questions to gain an in-depth understanding into the process of socially constructing academic practice to achieve success. With a minimum of two interviews, each interview lasted no more than 40 minutes in length. If clarification was further required, additional interviews were scheduled. Participants could provide their own pseudonym or one was assigned to them by the researcher. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, particular responses and questionnaires were assigned a participant number. Thus, responses were known by numbers only—participants' names were never associated with a number. Hence, all information is confidential and securely stored.

Data Analysis Procedures

Online Survey

For the purpose of this study, data from the Academic Outlook Measure was analyzed using SPSS. These items tapped into how students perceive themselves, other students, and faculty in relationship to their academic success. Pearson's Correlation was used to identify the degree to which variables were related to each other.

Since this was an exploratory study, the online survey was utilized to provide a broad foundation for the interviews. Upon transcribing audio-recorded interviews, open coding will be used to excavate themes broadly and to appreciate the particular nuances of what constitutes their experiences; activity codes, process codes, and/or strategy codes will be used (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 1998) to make sense of how students perceive and enacted their perceptions. Taking this qualitative approach, questions were sorted into themes that related to the codes used to analyze the interviews. With these codes and subcodes, this particular study focused on Academic Outlook as the section to present. Academic Outlook is being defined as the way students perspective regarding their positioning relative to other students and faculty on campus.

Upon transcribing the data, I conducted a first round of open coding. Open coding was conducted as a way to “identify salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief” (Rossman & Rallis, 1998) that might emerge from the interviews or observations. Open coding draws out concepts from which to create analytic terms that will be used not only to design a guiding framework but also to provide a language to critically discuss the findings. Open coding gave me such terms as opportunity, socialization, agency, representation, and resource. These codes were written in the margins of the copied data. Performing a second round of coding was dedicated to refining the open codes. Below are some definitions that emerged for some analytic terms. There were several rounds of focus coding. Focus coding means establishing definitions for analytic terms, finding links between those terms, and sorting codes for sub-codes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Focus coding requires a rigorous process of a line-by-line analysis based on the concepts that surfaced from the open coding (Emerson et al., 1995). Subcodes reveal processed that become enacted by these men. Process codes “are words and phrases that facilitates categorizing sequences of events, changes over time, or passages from one type or kind of status to another” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p.174). The phenomenon explored in this study was not about linear development, but it was about viewing the schooling experience as a process involving nested contexts. Strategy codes illustrate “tactics, methods, techniques, maneuvers, ploys, and other conscious ways people accomplish various things” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p.178) must be understood as contextually situated.

The table below outlines the themes, process codes, and subcodes used to analyze the case studies.

Themes	Process Codes	Subcodes	Strategy Codes
Academic Outlook	Comparative Resources/ Opportunities Community	Self Awareness Social Assessment Connectedness	Negotiating Engaged Social Awareness Zones
Differentiated Masculinities	Gender Expectations Responsibilities Socialization	Cultures Differences Schooling Aspirations	Racial/Ethnic/Gender Awareness Systemic Conditions Community Engagement

Mining a student perspective adds a depth to understanding that students contribute and respond to the academic landscape. In this way, academic success is a negotiated process that seems to happen more for some students than others relative to the kind resources and opportunities a student can access consistently.

Findings and Discussion

While there is the tendency to initiate the discussion of males in this study around gender, class, gender and sexuality, this is a first attempt to broker a public conversation of a reality that is statistically familiar or at least gaining public attention yet still remains elusive in the literature. No doubt it is important to understand Chicano/Latino males through the intersection of race, class, gender as well as sexual orientation; however, scaffolding is the best approach to building knowledge. This section highlights data, specifically some data related to Academic Outlook that measures student perception while the excerpts selected from the case studies shed light on schooling experiences.

Pearson’s Correlation was applied to examine Academic Outlook to measure the perception of Chicano/Latino students. Pearson’s Correlation was selected to describe the relationships between two variables. A relationship between .40 to .60 is considered a moderate degree of correlation while .60 to .80 strongly suggests that academic outlook is significantly informed by students’ perception about relationships with faculty and other students. An example of this linear relationship would be the common example that as the hours spent studying increases, the student’s grade on the test also increases. If there is a negative relationship, then the number of hours spent studying decreases so will the student’s grade on the test. The list below highlights some interesting correlations:

Table 1. Academic Outlook- Pearson’s Correlations

Item	Comfort	Treatment	Interaction	Study	Support 1	Community	Assistance	Support 2	Income	Age
Comfort	1	.29	.48**	.21	.14	.17	.23	.59**	-.17	-.25
Treatment	.29	1	.69**	.58**	.18	.01	.11	.12	-.11	.27
Interaction	.48**	.69**	1	.59**	.11	-.03	.05	.28	.03	.10
Study	.21	.58**	.59**	1	.03	.23	-.14	.21	.12	.15
Support 1	.14	.18	.11	.03	1	-.06	.64**	.02	.05	.33
Community	.17	.01	-.03	.23	-.06	1	.04	.30	-.18	-.02
Assistance	.23	.11	.05	-.14	.64**	.04	1	.22	-.27	.14
Support 2	.59**	.12	.28	.21	.02	.30	.22	1	-.07	-.13
Income	-.17	-.11	.03	.12	.05	-.18	-.27	-.07	1	-.07
Age	-.25	.27	.10	.15	.33	-.02	.14	-.13	-.07	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level 2-tailed.

The correlations above strengthen the likelihood that academic success is being experienced through socially mediated experiences. The following correlations highlight the significant findings in the above table:

Academic success is the result of supportive network/mentors and college is not an easy experience to figure out, but with a lot of assistance it became easier to understand ($r = .64$).

Students outside my ethnic group often invite me to study with them and White faculty and Faculty of Color interact with me the same way ($r = .59$).

I can count on the support of fellow students to help work through course material/lectures that I may not understand from time to time and men of my ethnic/racial background are comfortable on this campus ($r = .59$).

I never feel that faculty treats anyone from my ethnic background differently and Students outside my ethnic group often invite me to study with them ($r = .58$).

Men of my ethnic/racial background are comfortable on this campus and White faculty and Faculty of Color interact with me the same way ($r = .48$).

These correlations broker some understand that being connected to others plays a role a significant role to influence how they interact with the campus and how they view academic achievement. Men are not often portrayed as looking to relationships as resources compared to their female counterpart, or really the broader issue of being men and women in terms of academic identity development (Gándara, 1995). These correlations are by no means suggesting that a diverse presence will cause students and faculty to interact or that diversity is well integrated into the culture on campus. Perhaps situating these correlations within past and current diversity campaigns on campus offers a greater insight into student perceptions. Even when students experience academic achievement very differently than often conceptualized by institutions, the discourse dominating the literature in higher education insistently discusses academic achievement as individual achievement rather than co-constructed events. Improving the retention rate for Chicano/Latinos as well as all groups will require a reevaluation of its policies, practices, and its culture. Because most institutions, particularly in California, are not as fortunate to access the kind of diversity on campus, Sacramento State can potentially lead the conversation about how to provide a more inclusive education for all students if it can prioritize student perspectives and experiences related to diversity.

Understanding Difference in the Early Years: Schooling brokered Racial/Ethnic Awareness

Student interviews retrospectively reveal schooling challenges that were important to confront if they were going to envision and attain their educational aspirations. Students who pursue higher education are the most vulnerable students in the educational pipeline according to Gandara (2005). This section highlights some excerpts from 4 of the eight case studies to better understand the kinds of experiences that high achievers confront. Centering narratives means increasing the likelihood of accurately conducting the kind of ethnography that aims to attain the “particularizability, rather than generalizability” (Erickson, 1986) of Latino male experiences in

higher education. While higher education is the focus, understanding the early schooling experiences reveals how they positioned themselves to view school in their later years.

Schools are embedded into the social political milieu of their neighborhoods, cities, and states. Without much questioning, schools are potential sites where politics play themselves out in the playground, counseling offices, or even in the teachers' lounge. Ulises Ochoa, graduating senior majoring in Ethnic Studies, reflects back on his experience in 7th/8th grade. As a second language learner, he understood that being Mexican was a greater identifier than his attempts at developing English proficiency. Academic effort was not enough to shield him from becoming racialized rather than welcomed into a learning environment that insists that the best students will succeed.

Obviously I was still having some problems with grammar and stuff like that, but within those first years, it [academic skills] wasn't being pointed at because I was a different kid [in another way]. That's when I heard, wetback and beaner, la migra, [and] go back to your country. And I don't blame them because in a way it was just their ignorance because that's what they were hearing from somebody else. They didn't have the education to know that. So I felt that I learned a lot within those two years.

This excerpt highlights the challenges with being different not because of language/academic ability but being the visible target of racial hostility. This statement draws attention to the way "adult" conversations permeate schools but really there is no protection from this kind of patriotism. Martin, a graduating senior majoring in Sociology, offers insight into the way racialization occurs across contexts.

You got kids telling you you're worthless [in school] and then you try to work yourself into the culture. When you work in the fields you got people calling you wetback. People drive around and call you mojados [wetback]. And you tell yourself you don't want to be that and you start dressing different so that maybe people won't look at you like that. That's one of the reasons I joined the military. I had plans and I wanted to be accepted.

Martin's draws attention to the consequences of having diversity loosely exist in a society. More importantly, there is a strong reminder that a diverse presence is not the same as having diversity integrated into society. Amidst racial hostility, the fact that Martin turns to the ultimate form of demonstrating sameness by enlisting in the military raises questions about the kind of avenues that exist to contest racial hostility and find racial harmony. In an effort to find acceptance, Martin was met with much heavier disappointment.

I got to the military and people still called me a wetback. I got people of color calling me that. I went to a three-month boot camp. At that time, they could cuss and call you whatever they wanted. They mold you down and they try to build killers. That's what I basically was but I wanted to be something different. I wanted to be accepted through the Mexican and white culture. You go around town and you do get respected when you wear the uniform. I started thinking that when I take the uniform off I'm still the same old Mexican dude again. You don't wear your uniform forever. Then you go to the military

and other cultures are put through the same thing. People are called names because it's a tool to hate. How else are you going to kill someone if you don't hate them?

In an effort to find acceptance in two cultures, Martin found similarity no matter how temporary by standing in opposition to an enemy. Martin's experience speaks to the way race and class interacts. Coming to terms with the fact that taking off his uniform meant returning to be the same person he was before the military was something he found powerfully defining. The circuitous route to the military sheds light on the way seemingly independent events become woven experiences for those who become racialized, or what is often identified as racial microaggressions (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

Within the context of Sacramento State, Joaquin, a transfer student in his senior majoring in Government, offers his experience with diversity on the campus.

I would say I'm a second-class student. I have had to defend the material [curriculum focused on diversity] that the teacher has given us against the whole class. I had to do that several times, defending material that speaks of racism, speaks of experiences of minorities. I had to defend that. I haven't gotten tired yet, but it made me feel like, "why are you in this class?" In a sense, retention programs and courses for minorities get cut, especially right now. That sends a signal to me saying, "You're not worth, you're not a priority." Especially with what's going on with CAMP, EOP, the Multicultural Center, and Barrio Arts. That just sends a signal that you are not a priority. Being a sac state student and Latino, you are a target.

While the student body is diverse at Sacramento State, Joaquin interprets services aimed at directly integrating diversity as having a questionable existence on campus. Whether the administration intends their actions to be interpreted in this manner remains in question, yet from Joaquin's perspective the possibility of organizations, that particularly service minority, Spanish speaking, low income, and first generations students, being restructure only reinforces the belief of his second class citizenship given racial microaggressions. While other reasons maybe guiding the institution to examine EOP, CAMP, and the Multicultural Center, Joaquin is challenged to take another perspective on this issue because diversity is routinely targeted and discussed in higher education as costly and ultimately as a complex problem.

So being so rejected and abused by the educational system really created a destructive perspective of myself. I get A's and I am thinking, oh they are just being nice to me. I just can't give myself that credit. And it's like a roller coaster because I don't have that self-esteem. I was not smart growing up, I brought home F's and D's. I was always put me down, especially my counselor. She asked me, "Why do you want to go to college?" And I said, "well my sisters are in college" and then she responded, "you are going to start off with the lowest math, you are gonna start of with dummy math, are you a dummy, why don't you just work?" I just couldn't believe that this lady was treating me like that and she was my educational counselor.

Often times, academically successful students are portrayed as being highly confident and self-trusting, however, Joaquin offers a view on what it means to be successful. Joaquin seems

tormented and successful in spite of the institution. Even when Joaquin refers to his sister to insert possibility, the counselor refuses his offering and continues to diffuse hope. In the end, what did getting an A really mean for a student whose academic journey was mostly founded on working against the message of a legitimized educational system?

Overall, these experiences resonate with the concept of Resistance with Accommodation as well as Network Analytic Framework. In other words, men attained an education through the consistent rejection of existing power relationships and at the same time we begin to see how individuals in school impact students. We also have a sense that schools can be indefensible to the larger messages about what certain students represent in our society. Certainly, institutions cannot compensate for what is not happening in the larger society, but institutions cannot afford to dismiss student perspectives that for a lifetime are sensitized to issues of race and class issues. Because students are actively engaged in processes of racial microaggressions and diversity is not always integrated, more not less education around issues of diversity can directly benefit the institution and students to achieve greater awareness for both parties to assume accountability.

Differentiated Masculinities and Schooling

Systemic schooling conditions were intertwined with unforgiving gender socialization practices. Although race seemed to be the more salient issue for participants, notions of masculinity and sexuality created serious tensions for the way schooling was enacted. When I asked participants if there was a difference in the way men and women did schooling, Ernesto, a senior majoring in Ethnic Studies, and Joaquin illustrate how gender expectations can be mediated while others are more difficult to circumvent. According to Ernesto, there is an overriding message about the role of men in relationship to school and women.

Your job is to be a provider, not to go to school. Women have more time and they are more passionate about it. I don't want to ask for help. I was in the library looking for a book and I couldn't find it, but I didn't want to ask for it. I'm thinking that they are gonna think that I am stupid or something. If a girl did it, then they would just think, "Oh, she just can't find it." And I'm not thinking that I'm not going to it because I'm a guy.

When asked if there was ever a time he did ask for help, he admitted exchanging emails with a student in my course given the classroom learning agreements encouraged to exchanging emails to amplify their resources. Even at the time he exchanged email, Ernesto was compelled to justify his actions.

When we exchanged numbers it was because of class, the first thing that I told her that, I don't want you to think that I am hitting on you. I just need help. Can you help me please? And I think that when a guy asks a girl for help, it's automatically [assumed] you are hitting on them because guys don't ask for help. A guy is not gonna go ask another guy for help, in my opinion. A guy is not gonna be like, hey, can you help me out with that because any guy is gonna be like are you gay.

Ernesto's outlook was very common among men in the survey and case studies. Needing help was categorized as emasculating for not figuring things out on one's merit. It is particularly interesting that asking help from another male was somehow associated with being gay. When men resort to conceptualizing the act of one man exposing their academic vulnerability to another as being gay, homophobia is not the only way to understand this comment. Often times, men appear entrapped by the way masculinity means having to be uncompromisingly competent or seemingly invincible. Classroom engagement facilitated Ernesto being able to ask for help in manner that was not emasculating but rather situated within the realm of best student practices. Classroom culture repositioned Ernesto's outlook and practice regarding gender expectations.

At an early age Joaquin mother's taught him to cook, clear, wash clothes, and pay bills. That aside, he was strongly influenced by sisters who emphasized the importance of respecting women. Figuring out how to define and locate masculinity amidst activities that stereotypically women became clearer after taking a Chicano Studies courses, especially a course on Chicana feminism.

A lot of the females are used to that traditional male of behavior and so when they [women] would become involved with me, they would think that I was just a "wussy" or...and then they couldn't understand me, so it was confirmed by what the traditional male is and the what the traditional female is. All this really stereotypical things happened to me and I didn't fully understand it until I was older. But yeah, after the way my mom raised me and then the way that society was, there was a big clash of what a traditional male and having more progressive male identity.

At the University, they have really defined my identity as a male and I have to be more cautious of how I speak and how I view females. The best course was the Chicano/Latino courses. Those courses brought up the issues in the curriculum, especially the course I had with you about the *mujer Chicana*. That really impacted me. I still have patriarchal characteristics in me that I need to deal with. There is still a lot of homophobia with myself, especially because of the street language that I use, like "that's gay." I need to be able to show someone my vulnerability. I need just that confirmation that I'm ok. There is a lot of pressure. It's stressful. Those classes have been really helping me refine my identity to not be so exclusive in the way I speak or not make someone else feel uncomfortable and really trying to be as inclusive of other cultures.

Joaquin critically engaged with the curriculum to reconcile imposed notions of gender and masculinity. If academic excellence requires students to be fully present, then men will need more structured opportunities to uproot dominant messages of masculinity to create more inclusive avenues to academic succeed. In this respect, merit becomes a very dangerous concept not only for encouraging a strong message of individualism but because merit dually reinforces masculinity.

For participants in the study, making become a college student was a huge accomplishment given their schooling experiences in the past. Remaining focused on the aspiration of going to college on some level means pushing back on those forces that often lead

to humiliation. Ulises discusses his experience upon accepted to Sacramento State; specifically receiving a letter meant interrupting disbelief and reframing reality.

The letter said that I had to go to some orientations [University and CAMP] and stuff. But then it didn't hit me [right away]. I got a letter of acceptance letter from the university. I remember just thinking, "oh, s_ _ _ _." Not showing any emotions at the time, but being like "look what I got." My parents were really happy, so they start bragging. So I remember I put that letter in front of my binder and I was showed it off. I showed it off to everybody and everybody was seeing it. There was an art teacher that she was very prejudice, she was white and she never really helped me out. She would treat me differently, even with my capabilities. When she found out I was accepted to Sac State, I remember the look in her face, "how did that happen?" I remember at that time for a few weeks, I was just showing it off to everybody. For those of you who didn't think that I could get there, here it is.

The letter legitimized Ulises as a critical thinker, a future leader, as someone who can and made enough of a difference to be noticed by Sacramento State. Negotiating reality seems to be one of the best ways to describe how Ulises stays open to appreciating the significance of the letter. This seems to also be true for Martin, Ernesto and Joaquin in this section.

Policy Implications

This study set out to initiate a conversation to better understand the experiences of Chicano/Latino. Although these students were students at Sacramento State, the students were not restricted to discussing their experiences within this context. Using a mixed methods approach, there was evidence that Chicano/Latino males recognize social connectedness as important dimension to academic success, however, when it came to admitting needing assistance there was this idea that asking for help was an act of self-emasculatation. Also the discourse used by these men revealed that male privilege did not operate the same for them as it seem to for mainstream males as discussed in the section on gender and schooling. The combination of derogatory remarks combined with a process of racialization in constant operation affirmed that that deeply rooted messages exist about whom men are, how they should be treated, and how they should act given their race/ethnicity, class, and gender.

Certainly some of these findings might coincide with the experiences of their female counterpart as well as other first generation college students, however, this study represents one of the first times Chicano/Latino student narratives are centered. In the end, the perceptions and experience in this study certainly inspire new directions for research as well as outline important lessons. The findings in this study invite further investigation:

- How does a diverse campus climate compare to predominantly white institutions in terms of its impacts teaching and learning?
- If diversity is something the campus is proud of, how can it be more integrated into a variety of disciplines rather than marginalized in a few?

- What kinds of theories and methods need to be in place to most accurately interpret experiences of Chicano/Latino students? How do we deconstruct deficit thinking in that process?
- How does one address issues of diversity on campus when academic freedom is present?
- How do we build stronger relationships so that students can better deconstruct the kinds of academic practices required to do well in higher education?
- What models are used to conceptualize academic success at Sacramento State? To what extent have those models improved or hindered the campus retention rate?

While these questions reflect areas that still need further exploration, Garcia (2001) would suggest the findings provided serve as important stepping stones for growth. In other words, student perspectives outline a greater need for being responsive, responsible, reasonable, respectful, and reflective.

Responsive. Assessing the various perspective of administrators, faculty, staff, and students on the historical and contemporary political workings of an institution will surface gaps in understanding which might be useful in creating a more inclusive and effective teaching and learning environment. If there is a collaborative effort assumed by administrators, faculty, staff and students, then it is a shared priority. Perhaps it would be important to consider the mission statement of the institution and how it addresses or neglects to address the issue of diversity.

Responsible. Accountability structures and leadership must move in the direction of centrally incorporating discussions of diversity. This becomes a question of asking and supporting faculty to create curriculum that is more inclusive. Likewise, it means understanding diversity beyond ethnic celebrations but throughout the year. Conversations within and between groups are dire conversations that need to be funded and rewarded.

Reasonable. Despite a race-neutral approach in admissions, the case studies presented in this chapter offer another iteration about the ways in which diversity continues to impact the way minority students participate in the road to higher education. These narratives continue to affirm the strength and presences of racialization also informing the academic experience.

Respectful. When students of color share lived experiences within our institutions, it is important to think of them as not just being isolated or incidental but seriously question the extent to which other students have shared similar experiences for years. Student narratives remain collected data that is undervalued, underutilized, and readily dismissed by the institution because institutional racism is almost always narrowly viewed as a student of color-problem rather than a campus-wide problem.

Reflective. Creating a safe space using intergroup dialogue throughout the year, or yearly would increase the chances that core values and practices are shared in their meaning not just at administrative levels, but among students and faculty.

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