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**Examining the Sociocultural Influences on
the Academic Identity Development of
Highly Educated Borderland Latin@s**

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by

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Much has been written about the struggles of Latin@s in higher education. Researchers have noted the many obstacles and barriers to academic success throughout the educational pipeline. Mostly absent from the literature, up until recently, is an asset-based approach to understanding Latin@s and their path towards academic success. Much less literature exists on borderland Latin@s, who typically must leave their hometowns in pursuit of higher education. This phenomenological study examines borderland Latin@s from Eagle Pass, Texas that have earned a doctorate, medical doctorate, or juris doctorate. This study adds to the literature by investigating two major questions: (1) What sociocultural and lived experiences influenced the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s?

(2) What gender differences exist between the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s? The conceptual framework utilized for this study is Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model, which incorporates multiple sociocultural variables influencing Latin@s development while taking an asset-based approach to understanding.

I follow Asencio and Acosta (2010) and Carrillo (2013a) through the use of “@” in Latin@ to “acknowledge equally the experience of women and men in the construction of this diverse and heterogeneous community” (p. 70). Recent literature has used the term Latinx in a similar acknowledgement.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – Introduction	1
Background.....	4
Problem Statement.....	6
Purpose of Study.....	11
Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations.....	13
Significance and Contribution	14
Definitions of Key Terms	14
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	16
Borderland Latin@s.....	16
Latin@ Theories and Identity Development	20
Latin@ Critical Theory.....	21
Identity Theory	22
Latin@ Identity Theory	24
Latin@ Academic Success	27
Latin@ Gender Differences.....	30
Latin@ Social and Cultural Capital.....	32
Familial, Social, Linguistic Capital	34
Aspirational, Resistant, Navigational Capital.....	38
Summary	42
Chapter 3 – Methodology	44
Framework.....	45

Qualitative Design	46
Phenomenology	47
Counter-stories.....	48
Study Participants	49
Sampling Method.....	49
Sample size	50
Site description	50
Data Collection	53
Questionnaire.....	56
First and second interview	56
Data Analysis.....	57
Bracketing Researcher Bias and Positionality	60
Delimitations.....	61
Confidentiality and IRB Approval.....	62
Chapter 4 – Summary of Findings	63
Summary of Participants.....	63
Alicia.....	64
Bibi	65
Carmen.....	66
David.....	67
Jaime	68
Laura	69

Mario.....	70
Pablo	71
Pedro	72
Valeria.....	73
Participant Narratives and Emergent Themes	74
Familial Affirmation.....	74
Family	74
Mentors	76
Friends	78
Pride.....	80
Aspirational Success.....	81
High Aspirations and Grit.....	81
Hard Work	83
Financial Success.....	84
Borderland and Cultural Influence	84
Sense of Belonging	90
Catching Up.....	90
Belonging.....	90
Interpretation of Themes vs Community Cultural Wealth Model.....	92
Familial Affirmation Interpretation	94
Aspirational Success Interpretation	96
Borderland and Cultural Influence Interpretation.....	97

Sense of Belonging Interpretation	98
Findings Summary.....	100
Chapter 5 – Summary and Conclusions.....	101
Community Cultural Wealth Framework	101
Phenomenological Methodology	102
Research Questions.....	103
Major Findings.....	103
Family, Success, and Belonging	104
Theoretical Contribution.....	107
Deconstructing Gendered Experiences.....	111
Reflections and Delimitations.....	112
Implications for Research and Practice	113
Policy and Practice	114
Further Research.....	115
Concluding Thoughts.....	116
Appendices	118
A. Appendix A – Questionnaire	118
B. Appendix B – Interview Questions.....	119
C. Appendix C – Familial Affirmation Codes	120
D. Appendix D – Aspirational Success Codes	121
E. Appendix E – Borderland and Cultural Influence Codes	122
F. Appendix F – Sense of Belonging Codes	123

G. Appendix G – Consent for Participation Form.....	124
References	127

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The border can be regarded as a place of confluence, *un lugar confluente*...where different peoples, cultures, economies, histories, traditions, aspirations, and ambitions, along with practices, challenges, and claims come together. (Padilla, 2000, p. 92).

More than half of the U.S. population growth between 2000 and 2010 can be attributed to the rise in the Hispanic/Latin@ population (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2011). In Texas alone, 39 percent of the population is Latin@, with a strong concentration living along the Texas-Mexico border (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2015). Correspondingly, Latin@ enrollment in U.S. schools has increased. In Fall 2014, more than 50 percent of minority students in public schools were Latin@s (NCES, 2014). In the Texas K-12 population, Latin@s now account for 52% of total enrollment (TEA, 2016). Nevertheless, only 13.8 percent of Texas Latin@s age 18 or older possess a bachelor's degree or higher (Pew Hispanic Center, 2014). Gándara and Contreras (2009) deemed this a "Latin@ education crisis" and emphasized "we should do this because we have a moral imperative to match our actions to our rhetoric, and because it will ultimately be good for the soul of America" (p. 333). Educators and policymakers must better understand what makes Latin@s successful and how educational institutions can best serve this growing population.

Social and cultural challenges impacting Latin@s is considered a primary factor in a student success gap that exists along racial and gender lines (NCES, 2012; NCHEMS, 2012; Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015). Barajas and Pierce (2001) stated "despite the conservative policy claim that race and gender no longer matter in

American society and that affirmative programs are no longer necessary” research demonstrates that "Latinos continue to face discriminatory treatment in high school and college and that such policies are absolutely crucial to getting students of color into college” (p. 875). The challenges Latin@s face in educational attainment relative to their peers remains a reality, although the focus has expanded to encompass success for Latin@ students as well as access.

To change the educational trajectory of Latin@s, academics and researchers can seek a better understanding of how highly educated Latin@s nurture their academic identities. Research in this area could help identify attributes of highly educated Latin@s, particularly those who have successfully navigated the educational pipeline to completion. In addition, more research is needed on borderland Latin@s because of the high concentration living along the US-Mexico border (US Bureau of Census, 2015). Research focusing on highly educated borderland Latin@s and on the sociocultural influences that contributed towards academic success can advance our understanding of this growing population.

This study focused on the sociocultural influences that positively impacted highly educated borderland Latin@s academic identity development in Eagle Pass, Texas. For purposes of this study sociocultural influences included family, traditions, language, attitudes, and economic status. I aspired to take an asset-based approach to understanding; thus, highly educated is defined as those Latin@s with a graduate degree, including: doctorate, juris doctorate, and medical doctorate. While the term “highly educated” is subjective, I defined it as having the highest terminal advanced

degrees possible, because so few Latin@s attain this level of academic success and not enough research exists on this group (Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015). I argue that research on “highly educated” borderland Latin@s will contribute to the discourse on Latin@ student success because understanding the paths towards highest academic attainment will help “better understand and inform decision makers about the multiple paths to success for Latin@s, and all, students” (Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015, p. 3). Carillo (2013) noted “current ways of defining smart students has disenfranchised many Latin@s whose intelligence includes navigating through the educational system while seeking power and dignity in spaces outside of subtractive schooling environments” (p. 91).

Examining the sociocultural influences of highly educated borderland Latin@s to learn how they navigate the educational pipeline may yield key insights for increased retention and completion for all students within this context. Furthermore, the study sought to explore the gender differences among Latin@s since degree attainment data show that Latinas complete college at higher rates than Latinos (NCES, 2012; NCHEMS, 2012; Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). The overall intent was to understand how the academic identities of highly educated borderland Latin@s in Eagle Pass, Texas are developed, how sociocultural influences positively impacted their development, and to explore how gender differences shaped their academic experiences.

The remainder of this chapter will offer a background on Latin@ academic success in Texas, introduce Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth model which

served as my primary theoretical framework, provide a rationale for focusing on borderland Latin@s in Eagle Pass, TX, and summarize the purpose and methodology of the study. Chapter 2 will provide a more in-depth literature review of the borderlands context, Latin@ success, Latin@ theories, and Yosso's (2005) social and cultural capital framework. Chapter 3 will detail the qualitative research design and methods for the study. Chapter 4 will summarize the study participants and provide the findings and themes that emerged. Chapter 5 will provide a synopsis of the study, detail major findings tied to the research questions, and concluding thoughts.

Background

The current state of Latin@s in Texas provides important context for studying highly educated borderland Latin@s. A longitudinal study of Texas 8th graders in Fall 2004 found that 14 percent of Latin@s statewide had completed at least a higher education certificate 11 years later (THECB, 2016). Of these, 11.0 percent were Latinos while 17.0 percent were Latinas. By comparison, 28.7 percent of White students completed at least a certificate within 11 years at. In generally the same period, Latin@s earned 7.8 percent of the doctoral degrees awarded in the state (THECB, 2016). Of these students, 62 percent were to Latinas and 32 percent were to Latinos.

In October 2000, Texas policymakers sought to improve student achievement through the Closing the Gaps initiative, a 15-year strategic plan to improve student participation, success, excellence, and research (Closing the Gaps, 2016). To expand

on the progress of the Closing the Gaps initiative, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in 2015 unveiled its 60x30TX plan, which calls for at least 60 percent of Texans aged 25-34 to have a degree or certificate by 2030, and “lays out ambitious goals for statewide educational attainment; completions of two- and four-year certificates and degrees; marketable skills; and student loan debt” (60x30TX, 2015, p. 1). This study seeks to contribute to the research on Latin@ student success in Texas to help educators and policymakers better understand how the 60x30TX goals can be accomplished for the rapidly-growing Latin@ population. To attain these goals, it will be essential to change the trajectory of Latin@s. It stands to reason that focusing on the borderlands, where a majority of Texas Latin@s are concentrated, will jump start the collective efforts towards academic success. In particular for this study, I focused on the border city of Eagle Pass, Texas, located in Maverick County.

Eagle Pass is located along the southwest border of Texas and Mexico. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), 96 percent of Eagle Pass residents are Hispanic, 36 percent lack a high school diploma, 28 percent live below poverty with a median household income of \$33,000. However, Eagle Pass has also produced some of the highest number of MIT graduates, has seen several residents attend Ivy League institutions, and has produced many individuals with Ph.D.’s over the last 50 years (Chahin, 2017; J. Chahin, personal communication, March 22, 2017). Chahin (personal communication, March 22, 2017) noted in Eagle Pass “education is never placed at the pedestal of political expediency, meaning in Eagle Pass people care

about education deeply and teachers are truly committed to students development”. In support of an asset-based approach to understanding this phenomenological study, Eagle Pass provides a borderland environment that focuses on the positive aspects of education, instead of a deficit narrative. Chahin (personal communication, March 22, 2017) stated “in Eagle Pass you grow up in a majority culture and you learn to navigate all systems because you are never operating from a deficit perspective”. It stands to reason that once a person learns to navigate success early on, this ability carries on in future endeavors, even when individuals are faced with new or unknown adversaries.

Problem Statement

This study sought to understand the positive sociocultural influences on the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s in Eagle Pass, Texas. Specifically, the study used Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth model, a Latino critical theory stance, to examine the lived experiences of borderland Latin@s and the influence various forms of sociocultural capital have on their trajectory through their academic pathways. Perez and Taylor (2015) noted that researchers have utilized Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth model to explore Latin@ student access, but few have examined Latin@ student success (Astin & Oseguera, 2004; McDonough, 1997; Nora, 2004; Pérez & McDonough, 2008; Pérez, 2014; Perez, & Taylor, 2015). Yosso (2005) created a Latin@ model of community cultural wealth, adapted from Oliver and Shapiro (1995), noting “Communities of Color nurture cultural wealth through at least six forms of capital

such as aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital” (p. 77). This study is unique in that it uses the community cultural wealth framework to understand the sociocultural influences on Latin@s’ academic identity development by studying highly educated borderland Latin@s with an earned doctorate, medical doctorate, or juris doctorate degree.

The intent of the study was to contribute to the research on Latin@ student success by incorporating an understanding of sociocultural capital and its influences on academic identity development. Recently, Crisp, Taggart, and Nora (2014) conducted a systemic literature review of qualitative and quantitative research on factors that influence Latin@ college student success. They concluded:

Findings indicate that a combination of (a) sociocultural characteristics; (b) academic self-confidence; (c) beliefs, ethnic/racial identity, and coping styles; (d) precollege academic experiences; (e) college experiences; (f) internal motivation and commitment; (g) interactions with supportive individuals; (h) perceptions of the campus climate/environment; and (i) institutional type/characteristics are related to one or more academic success outcomes for Latina/o students. (p. 255)

Crisp, Taggart, and Nora (2014) identified an overreliance of Tinto’s (1993) model to explain Latin@ academic outcomes, citing research noting that this model does not account for contextual factors in diverse student groups. Much of the research on student retention in college, a precursor to academic success, uses Tinto’s (1993) model that emphasizes the importance of students developing a sense of attachment and purpose to the college (Syed, Azmitia, and Cooper, 2011). Nonetheless, Crisp et al. (2014) also acknowledged that a more culturally relevant theory for Latin@s may not exist (Baker, 2008; Castillo et al, 2006; Fisher, 2007; Museus et al., 2008;

Rendon, Novack, & Dowell, 2005; Tierney, 1993). Additional research on Latin@ student success is needed for a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of borderland Latin@s.

More recently a few scholars (Brown & Manning, 2007; Carrillo, 2013a, 2013b; Contreras & Gándara, 2006; Perez & Taylor, 2016; Perez & Sáenz (forthcoming); Sáenz & Bukoski, 2013; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Yosso, 2005), have framed their research of Latin@s with an asset-based counter-narrative focused on the sociocultural influences that promote academic success. Carrillo (2013a) articulated, “there are many working-class, Latin@ intellectual and cultural border-crossers who are marginalized by current definitions of achievement, cultural notions of intelligence, and deficit discourses germane to the Latin@ community” (p. 70). Yosso (2005) in particular proposed the community cultural wealth model as a framework for understanding the various sociocultural influences on Latin@ development.

A growing group of researchers have focused their agendas on strategies to close achievement gaps within and across the Latin@s population (Carrillo, 2013a, 2013b; Huerta & Fishman, 2014; Perez & Taylor, 2016; Sáenz & Bukoski, 2013; Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013; Sanchez, Huerta, & Venega, 2012). Meanwhile, although researchers have determined that gender plays a role in student success, additional research is needed to understand the differences between Latinas and Latinos, and how educational institutions can mitigate these differences to close the achievement gap for Latin@s and subsequently across races/ethnicities (Crisp,

Taggart, & Nora, 2014; González, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004; Hernandez & Lopez, 2004; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

Furthermore, researchers have taken a critical theory approach to understanding Latin@ academic success by moving past deficit-narratives (Brown & Manning, 2007; Carrillo, 2013a, 2013b; Contreras & Gándara, 2006; Perez & Taylor, 2016; Sáenz & Bukoski, 2013; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Yosso, 2005). In particular, Solórzano and Bernal (2001) defined Latin@ critical theory (LatCrit) as a “theory that elucidates Latinas/Latinos’ multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression” (p. 312). Yosso (2005) concurred that “LatCrit scholars assert that racism, sexism and classism are experienced amidst other layers of subordination based on immigration status, sexuality, culture, language, phenotype, accent and surname” (p. 72; see also Johnson, 1999; Montoya, 1994). Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth model, created with aspects of Anzaldúa’s (1987) Chicana feminist lens, implies understanding Latin@s is complex and suggests the intersection of multiple forms of social and cultural capital influence Latin@ academic identity development.

Anzaldúa’s (1987) borderlands theme and concept of living between multiple worlds emphasized the struggles Latinas face in holding on to their culture, while assimilating into the multicultural world heavily influenced by white society. Anzaldúa’s (1987) Chicana feminist lens noted themes among Latinas of *nepantla*, *El Mundo Zurdo*, and *Coylxauhqui* corresponding to issues of living in multiple worlds, struggling to move past the expected outcomes, and telling narratives of

social justice and change (Anzaldúa, 1987). These concepts resonated with my own experiences growing up along the Texas-Mexico border and having to leave to pursue higher education. As a borderland Latino male I could relate to Anzaldúa's (1987) Chicana feminist stance for Latinas. It is important to note, however, that the concept of borderlands is both literal and figurative. In the literal sense, the borderlands represent a multi-faceted environment and a world of their own, which I learned once I left my border town. In the figurative sense, the borderlands for Latin@s are between worlds, where one must learn to straddle his or her own cultural identity and that of a world created by white men.

Hernandez and Lopez (2004) maintained that “choosing between assimilation —relinquishing one's cultural identity, or integration — becoming an integral part of the larger society while maintaining one's cultural identity, is shaped by multidimensional factors” (p. 51). The figurative borderland Anzaldúa (1987) referred to is a place Latin@s find themselves constantly as they experience the world outside what they may know. Using Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth framework, influenced by Anzaldúa's (1987) borderland theories, to guide the study and through a phenomenological approach, I documented and created meaning from my participants' lived experiences.

I framed my study using Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model because it reflected aspects of Anzaldúa's (1987) Chicana feminist lens, but more importantly, because the model recognizes Latin@ experiences are complex and are influenced by multiple sociocultural forces. I used this lens to share the stories of

highly educated borderland Latin@s and to contribute to the research that seeks to advance our understandings of Latin@ academic success.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the following research questions:

- 1) What sociocultural and lived experiences influenced the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s?
- 2) What gender differences exist between the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s?

The first research question aimed to understand the factors that positively influenced the core academic identity development of borderland Latin@s; how their lived experiences contributed to their academic success, and at what points did the core of Latin@ academic identity occur and why. The second research question was meant to examine the gender differences among Latinos and Latinas to understand the variations in how each group forged ahead in their academic quests when faced with similar lived experiences.

The study utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach to better understand the lived experiences and sociocultural influences contributing to the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s. Phenomenological research is intended to understand participants lived experiences by having the researcher describe the influence of these experiences on participants' lives and what meaning the experiences have (Hays & Singh, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). While my qualitative study was a phenomenological design, my research

approach was to establish meaning and understanding from my participants lived experiences that moved beyond the “master narrative” or “majoritarian stories” that too often hold people of color at a deficit perspective (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Stanley, 2007). This study illustrates the sociocultural influences that nurtured and positively developed the academic identity of highly educated borderland Latin@s.

By examining the borderland culture and differing experiences among Latin@s, I sought to better understand the sociocultural influences that develop the core attributes leading to academic success. Through this study I wish to contribute to the qualitative research on the positive lived experiences that influenced the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s by creating meaning and understanding from their stories.

The participants for my phenomenological study were Latin@s from the same border town (Eagle Pass, Texas), growing up as 8th graders in the same time period (1996-1998), and achieving similar academic achievements (earning doctorate, medical doctorate, or juris doctorate degrees). The aforementioned meant I followed a criteria-based sampling methodology, defined by Hays and Singh as “important, predetermined criterion” (p. 170). Given my phenomenological design, I strived for a sample size between 10 and 12, with a balance of five to six Latinas and five to six Latinos, ultimately interviewing 10 participants with a 50 percent gender balance (Creswell, 2013). The balance between genders was important as the secondary research question aimed to understand how gender differences affected

Latin@s' academic identity development. Chapter 3 elaborates on the recruitment strategy and research study design.

Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations

The scope of this study is bounded by examining a concentration on highly educated borderland Latin@s in Eagle Pass, Texas. This delimitation was an important contribution to the research because the region is heavily Latin@, and focusing on a highly educated subgroup allows a more nuanced look at the positive contributors toward academic success. Many highly educated borderland Latin@s from Eagle Pass have attained a doctorate, medical doctorate, or juris doctorate, and grew up with similar sociocultural influences (Chahin, 2017; J. Chahin, personal communication, March 21, 2017). Therefore, understanding their academic identity development may yield a greater overall understanding of Latin@ academic success.

As the sole researcher for the study in collecting and analyzing the data, there is an inherent limitation of my own positionality, given my biases and assumptions as a highly educated borderland Latino. This was a strength as well as a limitation. To combat personal bias and assumptions, I followed phenomenological data collection and analysis techniques to bring rigor to the qualitative study. Specifically, I used the phenomenological technique of bracketing to focus on creating meaning and understanding from my participants' lived experiences rather than my own. I followed the four primary components of phenomenological data analysis suggested by Hays and Singh (2011), including: bracketing, horizontalization, textural description, and structural description. In particular, I used Moustaka's (1994) model

that incorporates these four components into a seven-step process for data analysis in a phenomenological study. Chapter 3 details this process.

Significance and Contribution

This research could inform education policymakers on sociocultural influences that systemically and structurally influence the academic success of borderland Latin@s students. Torres et al. (2010) noted “as educational settings continue to diversify, it is critical that the experiences of nonmajority students and adults be considered when creating policies and programs to help with student success” (p. 16). Focusing on highly educated borderland Latin@s can help educators understand factors that influence their success in academia and so that policymakers can promote systemic change in a region many Latin@s call home.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following definitions are to ensure consistency and understanding of key terms throughout the study. Those not accompanied by a citation are self-defined.

Latin@s: This includes Latinas and Latinos.

Borderland Latin@s: Latin@s living along the Texas-Mexico border.

Borderlands: Texas-Mexico border regions.

Gender gap: Refers to the baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate attainment gap between Latinas and Latinos and between their respective White counterparts.

Highly educated: Those earning a doctorate, juris doctorate, or medical doctorate.

Asset-based: Refers to the methodological approach by the researcher to focus on the positive aspects of the participants lived experiences and encounters.

Deficit narrative: Refers to the methodological approach by researchers to focus on negative or insufficient aspects of individuals.

Counter-stories (counter-narratives): Defined as perspectives that are opposite or counter to the presumed order and control (Stanley, 2007).

Sociocultural influences: Social and cultural influences, including but not limited to family, traditions, language, attitudes, and economic status.

Lived experiences: Participants' life experiences from childhood through adulthood.

Phenomenology: Research that describes and seeks to understand the meaning of participants' lived experiences and the influence these experiences have on participants' lives and academic attainment (Hays & Singh, 2011; Moustakas, 1994).

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

The qualitative study examined highly educated borderland Latin@s — the subject of little scholarly research — by taking a phenomenological approach to examine the lived experiences and the sociocultural influences that positively influenced their academic identity development. The study is unique in that it uses Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth framework to understand the sociocultural influences that shaped the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s. Following is an examination of: 1) a rationale for the borderland Latin@s context; 2) a brief history of critical theory and the complexities associated with Latin@ identity theories; 3) an overview of literature on Latin@ academic success and Latin@ gender differences; 4) a literature review of the impact of sociocultural capital on Latin@ academic success; and finally, 5) a summary of the theoretical framework.

Borderland Latin@s

Asset-based research examining highly educated borderland Latin@s and the positive sociocultural influences is important to better understand a fast growing population that will greatly influence the future of Texas and the entire nation. A college completion rate of 13.9 percent within 11 years for the Texas 8th grade Latin@ cohort needs vast improvement (THECB, 2016). Completion gaps need to be closed between Latin@s and their white counterparts, and between Latinas and Latinos themselves (THECB, 2016). In Texas, it is important for educators and policymakers to understand what makes borderland Latin@s academically successful

given the high concentration of Latin@s in this region. While understanding borderland Latin@s will not provide all the answers to the Latin@ success agenda, a better understanding of the sociocultural borderlands environment would be a significant step in a positive direction.

Padilla (2000) addressed education among Latin@s and the need for educators to adopt a different perspective, noting:

The situation along the border is conditioned by a confluential ontology and a bifurcated epistemology. This situation calls for a transformational education that seeks to promote individual and collective transformation through engagement in dialogue to promote conocer-type knowing, through technological development that is driven by saber-type knowing, and through the discovery and use of new possibilities that result from the confluence of cultures in border regions. (p. 4)

Padilla (2000) suggested that educators must try to understand the intersection of varying social and cultural variables associated with Latin@ academic identity development so that borderland Latin@s educators might create curricula that reached across racial lines.

The central tenants of Anzaldúa's (1987) work, which Yosso (2005) incorporated into her multidimensional community cultural wealth model, allowed me to explore gender differences among borderland Latinas and Latinos while seeking to understand the sociocultural influences they navigated toward academic success. As Crisco (2004) noted "Anzaldúa's answer, to the Chicano, is to embrace the mestiza consciousness, the ambiguity that comes from being a part of two (or more) cultures" (p. 56). Anzaldúa (1990) emphasized "we need to de-academize theory and to connect the community to the academy" (p. xxvi). The literal and

figurative world of Anzaldúa's (1987) borderlands meant I attempted to deconstruct the sociocultural experiences of borderland Latin@s as they navigated the academic pipeline while straddling multiple lands and varying cultural worlds in their quest for success. Yosso (2005) stated the experiences of marginalized individuals "expose the racism underlying cultural deficit theorizing and reveal the need to restructure U.S. social institutions around those knowledges, skills, abilities and networks—the community cultural wealth—possessed and utilized by People of Color" (p. 82).

Padilla (2000) stated "the Chicano educational attainment gap cannot be eradicated unless a Chicano pedagogy is created that takes into account the historical and cultural realities of the Chicano population along with the North American context" (p. 92). Padilla proposed how the intersection of four themes could eliminate the educational achievement gap between white society and Latin@s. The four themes included 1) the border as a confluential region; 2) epistemology in a Chicano context; 3) the inadequacy of reformist education; and 4) a proposal for Chicano education based on the philosophy of transformational education. Padilla noted:

An effective Chicano pedagogy will encourage personal and social transformation as the individual gains an ever-growing awareness of self and the environment. The transformation will be manifested by the ways in which Chicanas and Chicanos deal with the problems they experience and by the kinds of alternatives they create for themselves. (p. 96)

Padilla suggested that understanding Latin@ educational success meant taking into account the sociocultural influences Latin@s experience. In Texas, it follows that researchers should seek to understand the sociocultural influences on the

concentration of Latin@s living along the Texas-Mexico border so that educators and policymakers can apply the knowledge to close achievement gaps between Latin@s and their white counterparts (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2015; NCHEMS, 2012; THECB, 2016).

Sáenz and Bukoski (2013) suggested taking a Chicana feminist viewpoint in trying to understand Latino male educational experiences. Calderón et al. (2012) proposed “within Chicana feminist epistemology scholarship, there is a sense of political urgency to engage in a decolonizing process and address educational inequities within Chicana/o communities” (p. 516). Researchers studying Latino males in higher education and searching for the cause of the achievement gap within Latin@s and across other racial groups might find that incorporating Anzaldúa’s (1987) Mestiza theories may yield a perspective that could lead to positive outcomes for Latin@s, especially when applied within a borderland context (Sáenz & Bukoski, 2013; Carrillo, 2013a).

I sought to create meaning from the counter-stories of borderland Latin@s who successfully navigated their academic worlds with various sociocultural influences so educators can connect these lived experiences to the expanding Latin@ population. Yosso’s community cultural wealth model emphasizes that understanding borderland Latin@ academic success means understanding the various sociocultural capital at play. Yosso’s model, informed through Anzaldúa’s theories, suggests that researchers, educators, and policymakers must view borderland

Latin@s from multiple angles and realize that Latin@ cultural capital must be deconstructed into its various components to reach true understanding.

Latin@ Theories and Identity Development

I framed my study specifically using Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model, however, my overarching methodological and epistemological stance was guided by a LatCrit approach, a subset of critical race theory. Solórzano (1998) defined critical race theory:

Indeed, critical race theory is critical and different because: (a) it challenges the traditional paradigms, texts, and related discourse on race, gender, and class; (b) it focuses and examines the effect of race and racism from the perspective and experiences of women and men of color; and (c) it provides a guide to transform those oppressive social conditions in which women and men of color find themselves. (p. 123)

Critical theory was discussed in the 1930s in the Frankfurt School by Horkheimer (1972), however, it was not until the 1970s that the theory fully developed. Bell (1979) is considered the critical race theory's "intellectual father figure," yet Freeman (1978) also strongly influenced the establishment of critical race theory in the 1970s (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 5). Ladson-Billings (1999) noted "critical race theory is both an outgrowth of and a separate entity from an earlier legal movement called critical legal studies" (p. 212). Bell and Freeman "argued that the traditional approaches of filing amicus briefs, conducting protests and marches, and appealing to the moral sensibilities of decent citizens produced smaller and fewer gains than in previous times" (Ladson-Billings, 1999, 212). Bell (1979) proclaimed "criticism, as we in the movement for minority rights have every reason to learn, is a

synonym for neither cowardice nor capitulation” and it “may instead bring awareness, always the first step toward overcoming still another barrier in the struggle for racial equality” (p. 533).

Latin@ Critical Theory

Solórzano and Bernal (2001) defined Latin@ critical theory (LatCrit) as a “theory that elucidates Latinas/Latinos’ multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression” (p. 312). Yosso (2005) concurred that “LatCrit scholars assert that racism, sexism and classism are experienced amidst other layers of subordination based on immigration status, sexuality, culture, language, phenotype, accent and surname” (p. 72; see also Johnson, 1999; Montoya, 1994). Yosso (2005) created her community cultural wealth model utilizing a Latin@ critical theory and Chicana feminist lens, in particular citing the work of Anzaldúa (1987) and the expansion of Chicana feminist theory. Anzaldúa (1987) proposed three themes of *nepantla*, *El Mundo Zurdo*, and *Coylxauhqui*, which provided the framework of much Chicana feminist epistemology (Anzaldúa, 1999; Calderón, Bernal, Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012).

Syed, Azmitia, and Cooper (2011) argued Yosso (2005) proposed the concept of community cultural wealth as a critique to the social capital norm, which too often holds persons of color to a deficit model in which White middle class is the standard to which all others are judged. While this study touched on the three central tenants of Anzaldúa’s work, I framed my study using Yosso’s (2005) more recent model, which incorporates expanded forms of these sociocultural influences.

Identity Theory

It is important to understand the history of identity theory and how it has transcended into understanding academic identity development along racial and gender lines. The origins of identity theory are traced to Erikson (1956, 1968), who created a psychosocial development model comprising eight life stages from infancy to older adulthood that help describe identities at the varying stages. Kroger (2007) noted how “Erikson’s scheme of personality development emphasizes the interdependence of all stages and provides a helpful model for understanding the relationship of identity to other psychosocial tasks pressing for resolution at different stages of the life cycle” (p. 10). Erikson (1964) touched on the challenges of describing ethnic identity without directly speaking to this point, stating “true identity, however, depends on the support which the young individual receives from the collective sense of identity characterizing the social groups significant to him: his class, his nation, his culture” (p. 93). Syed, Azmitia, and Cooper (2011) asserted “Erikson specified that forming an identity, which he viewed as a personal sense of coherence across time, context, and multiple identifications, is a formative task emerging in adolescence and continuing throughout adulthood” (p. 444). However, much of Erikson’s research and others of his time period focused on white males, thus biasing the theories toward this specific group. Nonetheless, Erikson (1964) understood there are various cultural and societal influences on one’s identity and thus his identity theory serves as the foundation for most racial, ethnic, and gender

identity development theories (Marcia, 1966; Josselson, 1987; Josselson & Harway, 2012).

Building upon Erikson's previous work, Marcia (1966) identified four identity types — identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement. Josselson (1987) expanded on Marcia's framework and identified four statuses for women: foreclosures, identity achievers, moratoriums, and identity diffusions. Phinney (1992) proposed an integrated three-stage model of ethnic identity development, including unexamined ethnic identity, ethnic identity search (moratorium), and achieved ethnic identity. All of these incorporated previous ethnic identity research (Atkinson et al., 1983; Cross, 1978; Kim, 1981; Marcia, 1966, 1980). Phinney (1992) suggested future research needed to account for the “many variables that may influence ethnic identity formation, including gender, socioeconomic status, family variables, and contextual factors, such as ethnically homogeneous vs heterogeneous environments” (p. 76). Encapsulating identity across racial and gender lines, Josselson and Harway (2012) described Erikson's concepts of identity, noting “it is not just how we see or wish to see ourselves but how we are seen by others — and how others' views of us affects how we see ourselves” (p. 5)., Studies suggest that understanding identity development for an all-encompassing ethnic group like Latin@s is multifaceted and further research is needed for this expanding population.

Latin@ Identity Theory

Because the term Latin@ refers to multiple groups (Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, South Americans), there are complexities associated with Latin@ identity theories and no single Latin@ identity theory exists. The most recent census (2010) noted that Hispanics comprise Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or any other Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin that one relates to. The census (2010) questionnaire recognized the complexity of defining Latin@ by offering the multiple options listed above in response to answering “yes” to being Hispanic.

Torres, Howard-Hamilton, and Cooper (2003) described relevant theories used by researchers, including Keefe and Padilla’s (1987) Mexican American ethnic orientation model, Ferdman and Gallego’s (2001) six-orientation Latin@ identity development model, and Torres’ (1999) bicultural model. Quintana and Scull (2009) observed, “to understand Latinos’ ethnic identity requires an appreciation of sociological, social psychological, and developmental processes” (p. 82). Understanding the complexities and differences among previous Latin@ identity theory models is important for my study because the notion of plurality in understanding Latin@s is essential. Multiple sociocultural variables contribute to Latin@ identity development and the varying Latin@ identity models reinforce the idea that people are different, even within Latin@s, and thus Erikson’s original identity theories do not directly apply.

Keefe and Padilla (1987) concentrated on five cultural spheres, including language familiarity, cultural heritage, ethnic pride, ethnic interaction, and perceived ethnic discrimination. More recently, Torres et al. (2010) used the framework of Keefe and Padilla (1987), but further studied how life circumstances and/or changes in Latin@s environment during adulthood influence their identity development. Torres et al. (2010) articulated that while there is ample research on overall ethnic identity development, little research exists examining Latin@ identity development into adulthood, where life choices strongly influence future paths. Research on Latin@ ethnic identity has focused on the strength of the Latin@ culture and the extent to which Latin@s have acculturated to the American way of life (Martinez et al., 2012). Martinez et al. noted:

While studies that examine the extent to which Latinos have acculturated have proved to be helpful in understanding Latino ethnic identity, they do not necessarily address how shifts in or re-evaluations of ethnic identity can continue well into adulthood, even when certain levels of acculturation have been reached. (p. 191)

Utilizing Marcia's (2002) identity reconstruction research, Torres' et al. (2010) study of Latin@ ethnic identity concurred that "changes in the environment or life circumstances had the greatest effect on the reevaluation of identity" (p. 3). Torres et al. (2010) observed that 35 percent of Latin@s surveyed illustrated the process of looping, where one questions his or her identity while not completely losing his or herself. The process "entails an experience that causes disequilibrium in one's life and prompts the individual to enter a re-formation period that promotes

some reconstruction of his or her identity, but does not create a disintegration of the identity” (Torres et al., 2010, p. 5).

Recently, Gallegos and Ferdman (2012) created the model of Latin@ identity development, noting the complexity associated with Latin@s by suggesting six identity orientations: Latin@-integrated; Latin@-identified; Subgroup-identified; Latin@ as other; undifferentiated/denial, and white-identified. They cautioned against “overgeneralizations about Latin@ identity and the stereotyping of Latin@s as a group,” but argued that understanding Latin@s needs to become even broader and deeper, as the world becomes more diverse and complex (p. 55). Latin@ identity is complex and research shows life circumstances influence the identity development throughout the life cycle (Gallegos and Ferdman, 2012). Thus, research on Latin@s suggests identity development is strongly influenced by the intersection of multiple social and cultural environments.

Understanding Latin@ identity development means deconstructing the history behind identity research and, as Anzaldúa noted, decolonizing inequities within the Latin@ community. In terms of student success, Latin@s are not completing at levels of their white counterparts. Learning to deconstruct the research around Latin@ academic identity development could close this gap. The complexity associated with Latin@s and the various sociocultural influences means additional research is needed that “disrupts the dominant Western model of education” (Calderon, Delgado-Bernal, Huber, Malagon, & Velez, 2012). The study on highly educated borderland Latin@s seeks to contribute to the understanding of Latin@

academic identity development by examining the positive influences of the sociocultural borderland.

Latin@ Academic Success

With the effort to close educational achievement gaps within the growing Latin@ population there has been an increase research focusing on academic success across the disciplines of psychology, education, sociology, and anthropology (Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011). Syed, Azmitia, and Cooper noted “a common thread that runs through social science disciplines of identity for students’ academic success and persistence throughout the pipeline” (p. 443). Social identity theory suggests that race, ethnicity, gender, and social class identification between groups incorporates both a sense of pride and a level of threat among one another (Syed, Azmitia, Cooper, 2011; Taifel, 1981).

Cooper (2003) developed the bridging multiple worlds theory, attempting to integrate research, policy, and practice between ethnic identity development and cultural understanding in schools (Cooper, 2011; Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011). The theory consists of five inter-related dimensions: 1) demographics along the pipeline; 2) developing college going identities; 3) math and language pathways; 4) resources and challenges across multiple worlds of families, peers, schools, and communities; and 5) cultural research partnerships (Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011, p. 462). Syed, Azmitia, and Cooper (2011) declared current research has identified the importance of understanding identity development in the context of academic success for people of color, but they noted most research has focused on identity in

terms of race or gender, instead of academic identity. Hatt (2012) defined academic identity as “the ways we come to understand ourselves within and in relation to the institution of schooling and how this identity shapes our own self-perceptions of efficacy, ability, and success in relation to academic potential, performance, and achievement” (p. 439). This study focuses on how sociocultural influences impact the development of this academic identity in highly educated borderland Latin@s.

Hernandez and Lopez (2004) professed “it seems that for many Latino students the development of their ethnic identity is associated with their overall identity development,” thus influencing their psychosocial development and impacting their higher education experiences (p. 51). These scholars emphasized the confluence of personal, environmental, and socio-cultural factors influencing student retention and ultimately academic success. Higher education institutions must provide adequate services for Latin@ students with identity development issues by demonstrating cultural awareness and sensitivity (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004). Similarly, findings from Martinez et al. (2012) demonstrated that higher education administrators and faculty will encounter students during a stage of identity development or reformulation and must be prepared to address these major life events to achieve academic success regardless of the environmental influences.

Carrillo (2013a) stated “mainstreaming oneself means adopting hegemonic conditions in their entirety” and thus “a nuanced dance between excelling in mainstream spaces of schooling all while remaining committed to the identities that more closely align with one’s working-class ‘home’” (p. 199). In examining

academically successful males, Carrillo (2013b) suggested a Mestiz@ theory of intelligence (MTI) model, as an expansion of Gardner's (1985) multiple intelligences theory. Carrillo (2013b) introduced seven interconnected sociocultural influences on Latino academic success and gifted identities: centering critical, hybrid identities; decolonization; struggling for psychic, cultural, emotional, and spiritual wholeness; straddling multiple forms of cultural capital; commitment to social justice; centering subaltern knowledge; and, navigating/contesting oppression. Carrillo (2013a) indicated "the knowledge, resources, and cultural and social capital that are attained by pursuing higher education are perceived as valuable tools for pushing for equity in communities of origin, schools, knowledge production, and in the larger society" (p. 78). It has often been assumed that people of color lack the social and cultural capital required for social mobility, and schools have worked from this assumption to help these students attain the social skills and cultural capital that are in their eyes lacking (Valenzuela, 1999; Yosso, 2005).

Yosso's community cultural wealth model, the guiding framework of my study, identifies six types of capital educators could use to inform their interactions and understanding with students of color. Perez and Taylor (2015) used Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model to conceptualize the processes for success of Latino males by acknowledging the intersections of different forms of capital. I framed my study with Yosso's (2005) model because it incorporates the intersection of sociocultural influences on the academic identity development of borderland Latin@s, while allowing me to explore gender differences.

Latin@ Gender Differences

Understanding the role of gender differences among Latin@s is essential to understanding the role sociocultural influences have on their academic identity developments. Barajas and Pierce (2001) asserted “the literature on the sociology of gender suggests that gender matters a great deal in the achievement of school success” (p. 862). Crisp, Taggart, and Nora’s (2014) literature review on Latin@ persistence and success indicated that “gender, parental education, and socioeconomic status were found across the reviewed studies to be related to Latina/o students’ grades, persistence decisions, and odds of degree completion” (p. 255).

Latinos have struggled to keep pace with Latinas in educational success despite similar environments and a growing group of researchers have focused on what can be done to close this gender achievement gap (Carrillo, 2013a, 2013b; Huerta & Fishman, 2014; Perez & Taylor, 2016; Sáenz & Bukoski, 2013; Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013; Sanchez, Huerta, & Venega, 2012). Researchers want to understand how Latino males and females experience their educational journey, why Latinos are less successful than Latinas despite similar environments, and what can be done to counter the factors, including gender roles, contributing to the “vanishing” of Latino males in higher education (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2014; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

Barajas and Pierce (2001) studied a sample of successful high school and college students to examine “how race and gender shape Latina and Latino paths to

school success in college” (p. 859). They discerned that Latinas found ways to successfully navigate negative stereotypes by sustaining positive views of themselves and by identifying as strong Latinas. Compared to Latinas, Latinos had a more individualist approach and an overreliance on dominant group models, a finding Barajas & Pierce (2001) explored. These attributes resulted in Latinos’ negative self-evaluations and ultimately lower levels of educational success than their female counterparts. They expressed:

Early in their schooling, Latinas sought out and found cultural translators who aided them in becoming bicultural, while Latinos found models from the dominant group who encouraged mainstream success but did not help them learn how to navigate between dominant and minority group cultures. (p. 874)

As noted, Sáenz and Bukoski (2013) suggested a Chicana feminist viewpoint on understanding the Latino male educational experiences, while deconstructing the influence of patriarchy and masculinity. Sáenz and Bukoski proposed the “degree to which a young man is able to access the social, cultural and financial capital needed to gain respectability often is manifested in stark choices not unlike the choices once (and in some ways, still) constricting women’s lives” (p. 4). Researchers studying Latino males in higher education might find that incorporating Anzaldúa’s (1987) Mestiza theories may promote a perspective that could lead to positive outcomes for Latinos (Sáenz & Bukoski, 2013; Carrillo, 2013a). Carrillo advised:

If a key aspect of masculinity development centers on the importance of acquiring a sense of power, further research is needed on the possibilities of channeling feelings of unhomeliness into the development of culturally situated intellectual masculinities that elicit pride, commitment to

community, and strategic decision making around how to achieve academic success without losing one's soul. (p. 204)

Perez and Taylor (2015) more recently incorporated Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model to study how Latino males translated varying forms of sociocultural capital to academic success. A counter narrative, asset-based approach was taken to focus on "Logradores" (Latino male achievers) to "emphasize one of our fundamental research assumptions: Latino males can and do succeed in higher education" (Perez & Taylor, 2016, p. 2). Nonetheless, Perez and Taylor (2015) emphasized that not enough research exists on the postsecondary education experiences of Logradores to truly understand the social and cultural environmental factors that influence their success. I seek to contribute to the research on highly educated Latin@s by looking at the sociocultural influences on the academic identities of borderland Latin@s, while examining the influences of gender.

Latin@ Social and Cultural Capital

As the nation becomes more diverse, educational institutions need to understand the groups they are serving to promote success equity. Various sociocultural influences impact Latin@s and the academic paths they take. This study took a sociocultural perspective in framing my discussion on highly educated borderland Latin@s who successfully traversed the educational pipeline to the end. Brown and Manning (2007) defined a sociocultural perspective in education research as uniting "the academic fields of culture and cognition, considering the role of each

child's cultural group in learning" (p. 28). Brown and Manning (2007) further articulated:

Only when we move beyond simple acknowledgement of Latino culture to celebrating the uniqueness of every individual will we be able to incorporate, value, and respect a multitude of languages and cultures inside and outside educational settings. Only then will we be able to get past archaic assimilationist discourses. (p. 39)

In Barajas and Pierce's (2001) study on how race and gender shape Latin@ paths to academic success in college, they noted that while research has suggested students of color must adopt white, middle-class behaviors to succeed academically, the Latin@ path towards success is complex and involves of multiple social and cultural factors. Hernandez and Lopez (2004) reviewed the research on Latin@ persistence and success and identified the impact of sociocultural influences, "defined as multiple forces that can shape the personal and environmental experiences of Latino college students and includes various aspects of identity development" (p. 49). Individual factors impacting success included high school grade point average, high school test scores, academic self-concept, support from family, and finances. Factors influencing Latin@ success have been the deeply rooted issues of school segregation, language suppression, cultural exclusion, school financing, and curricula differentiation (Carrillo, 2013a; Valencia, 2011). Researchers "have only begun to scratch the surface in understanding the role and qualities of Latina/o cultural values and experiences in predicting academic outcomes" (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2014, p. 263).

Culture is not static, nor representative across groups of people, but instead represents the intersection of ‘the development of people, cultural forms, and social positions in particular historical worlds’ (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998, p. 33). Hatt (2012) asserted:

The figured world of smartness is located within us, not as a biological capacity but, instead, as a cultural practice we use to invest meaning in others and ourselves. If we fail to pay attention to how smartness operates in schools and within larger society, we miss a critical opportunity to reimagine and reinterpret smartness, particularly for low-income students and students of color. (p. 439)

This study explores the sociocultural influences that impact borderland Latin@s’ academic identity development and in particular sought to understand the intersection of sociocultural capitals.

Familial, Social, and Linguistic Capital

Anzaldúa (1987) and other Chicana feminists have long argued the impact of the family on Latin@ identity development and recent research has confirmed this influence (Bernal & Knight, 1997; Martinez et al., 2012; Torres, 2004). However, Bernal and Knight argued that it was the intersection of family, acculturation, and enculturation that influenced Latin@ ethnic identity (Martinez et al., 2012). As such, I included research on familial, social, and linguistic capital in this section. While they are considered mutually exclusive forms of capital, I argue each is strongly influenced by family structure, ideals, and values. Yosso (2005) defined familial capital as incorporating a commitment to community well-being; social capital as a network of people and community resources; and linguistic capital as the intellectual

and social skills achieved through communicating in a bicultural and bilingual environment. Thus, the research on the influence of the Latin@ family helps explain the effect on Latin@ academic identity development through these three forms of capital.

In a study of six Mexican-American families, Delgado-Gaitan (1992) determined “the socialization of Mexican-American children must be explained within the historical, sociocultural, and socioeconomic conditions that impact Mexican-American families” (p. 497). Delgado-Gaitan (1992) argued that while limited familial education affects Latin@s’ educational paths, the primary problem is not ignorance nor lack of motivation, but a lack of resources and access to advantages available to other more affluent families. Delgado-Gaitan emphasized “the home learning environment is created through complex interactions between parents and children and is influenced by the adults' background as well as the sociocultural and sociopolitical forces outside the home” (p. 497). The educational environment of the Latin@ family is influenced by the cultural group identity, the parents’ education background and knowledge of schooling, and their socioeconomic situation. More recently, Fuller and García (2010) determined “some institutions, especially schools, often fail to recognize the social assets with which Latin@ children arrive, from respect for adults and vibrant social skills to serving their family by getting ahead in school” (p. 564).

Familismo, “the behavioral manifestations of Latinos that reflect a strong emotional and value commitment to family life,” has often been associated with

Latin@ family research (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004, p. 40; Valdés, 1996; Vega, 1995). Halgunseth, Ispa, and Rudy (2006) expanded on this definition as the “desire to maintain strong family ties, the expectation that the family will be the primary source of instrumental and emotional support, the feeling of loyalty to the family, and the commitment to the family over individual needs and desires” (p. 1285). Family interdependence and parental support are key determinants of Latin@ academic success (Martinez et al., 2004; Ong, Phinney, & Dennis, 2006; Schneider & Ward, 2003). *Familismo* research finds that Latin@ parents’ cultural values place strong importance on children who are *bien educados*. or well-educated,. That is, they do well in school and display good manners, proper behavior, morality, and respect for and obligation to adult authority (Fuller & García, 2010; Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006; Livas-Dott et. al, 2010). In Martinez et al.’s (2012) study examining family dynamics and their influence on Latin@ ethnic identity development, the researchers asserted that Latin@s traditionally have been described as more family oriented, placing a stronger emphasis on *familismo*, than other racial and ethnic groups.

Using a theory of resilience, Ceja (2004) studied Chicana students’ perspectives on the role their Latin@ parents play in developing college aspirations. Ceja noted the support of parents and family members strongly influenced Chicanas’ desire to attend college. Ceja added that although much research focused on cultural deficit narratives and assumptions, “more current research has attempted to show a more accurate representation of how Mexican parents articulate to their children the

importance of succeeding in school” (p. 340). Brown and Manning (2007) examined the discourse of a Latin@ family to better understand how deficit, assimilationist discourse affect Latin@ parents and their children, and determined Latin@ mothers created an expectation for academic success. Brown and Manning (2007) suggested educational institutions should reject the Latin@ deficit perspective, and instead should focus on “sociocultural perspective that embraces the culture and humanity of every student and helps support the maintenance of multiple cultures” (p. 25). In Latin@ family research, Halgunseth, Ispa, and Rudy (2006) observed a prevalence of *consejos*, “a form of psychological control” where “the Latino parent is intended to shape the child’s attitudes and behaviors,” through shared stories (p. 1291).

Maintaining one’s cultural values within the Latin@ family while trying to acculturate to academic discourse has been a frequent topic in Latin@ educational research (Crisco, 2004; Fuller & García, 2010; Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006; Martinez et al., 2012). Crisco studied bilingual Latin@ students’ experiences and argued “teachers should listen to their students in order to take a critical approach toward institutional change” (p. 39). Crisco’s Latin@ students described the importance of family and detailed how parents constantly tried to keep culture alive in their children. Even while Latin@ parents fight to keep their culture flourishing across generations, acculturation research shows “how parental mental models modify in light of immigration, beliefs of social networks, teachings by ‘experts,’ and pressure from current or expected socioeconomic circumstances” (Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006, p. 1282).

In studying the social psychological development of Latin@ culture and family, Fuller and García (2010) observed how groups or organizations outside Latin@ households influence children's development, how families select social units (neighborhoods, churches, schools) that diversify how Latin@s are raised, and how multiple social contexts influence Latin@ cognitive development. Martinez et al. (2012) asserted "the exploration of family dynamics illustrates that family members provide both positive and negative interpretations of culture and identity" (p. 198). Nevertheless, Latin@s learn to value their culture from their parents, while developing their own ethnic identity, and learning to incorporate their culture with other racial/ethnic groups (Martinez et al., 2012). Similarly, current research has shown that Latin@s overcome "education gaps, pervasive poverty, and social or cultural barriers" to achieve academic success and degree attainment (Cardenas, 2014, p. 6). Cardenas professed Latin@s "must navigate a variety of code switching issues, living between a world of surviving and thriving," while being aware of "constant dualities (man vs. educated man, American vs. Latino [or Chicano, Mexican, Hispanic, etc.], student vs. professional)" (p. 46). Latin@s need to understand their *mestiza* consciousness to thrive against the sociocultural influences that systematically have created barriers to academic success (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Aspirational, Resistant, and Navigational Capital

Similar to grouping familial, social, and linguistic capital, with education research on families influencing various social and cultural capitals, this section groups aspirational, resistant, and navigational capital. Yosso (2005) defined

aspirational capital as the “ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of real and perceived barriers.” Resistant capital is defined as “the oppositional behavior challenging inequality,” and navigational capital is “the ability to navigate through barriers and inequalities towards academic success” (p. 77).

Research shows that successful Latin@s learn to navigate spaces by developing relationships that encourage higher expectations and by building resilience in circumnavigating the educational pipeline to and through college. In essence, academic success for Latin@s is possible for those who dream of success, set goals, and work towards achieving those goals. Yosso’s assertions regarding aspirational capital drew strongly from the work of Gándara (1982, 1995), who concluded that Latin@s maintain high aspirations for themselves, their children, and their community. I contend that navigational capital increases aspirational capital among Latin@s, which influences resistance capital, thus leading to academic success throughout their lives.

In a study on Latin@ academic success, Arbona and Nora (2007) found “the experiences of college students are represented by a social sphere of influence and an academic realm involving experiences with faculty, students, and other academic staff” (p. 249). Arbona and Nora’s (2007) quantitative study examined the factors influencing persistence and degree attainment among Latin@s, where they asserted “Latino students entering college with a rigorous academic curricular background are just as likely to have the same advantages as White students with similar academic backgrounds and perform academically as well as white students” (p. 250). Students

who took a rigorous academic curriculum in high school were more likely to have higher educational expectations/aspirations, which increased academic success in college. In their recent literature review on Latin@ persistence, Crisp, Taggart, and Nora (2014) observed “review findings draw attention to the relationship between students’ confidence in performing academic tasks (i.e., self-confidence) and academic outcomes for Latina/o students including grades, persistence decisions, and the odds of degree completion” (p. 256).

In a study of academically successful Latin@s in high school and college, Barajas and Pierce (2001) indicated “successful young Latinas found ways to carve out safe spaces through their relationships with other Latinas and to successfully construct paths through the predominantly white, middle-class space of high school and college” (p. 864). Barajas and Pierce (2001) noted “more than two-thirds of the Latinas said they enrolled in the mentor program because they had a strong desire to help someone like themselves” (p. 865). Among Latin@s, relationships with friends, family, and the community help them develop positive meanings and values with each other, which when applied to school settings can encourage academic success (Barajas & Pierce, 2001).

In his work on Chicano pedagogy, Padilla (2000) described self-determination/self-concept as “a group of people individually and collectively exercising their fundamental right to construct their own lives, their own communities, and their own world view” (p. 97). In a quantitative study on predicting the academic success of Mexican-American and White students,

Rodriguez (1996) reported that academic self-concept was significantly related to GPA, where Mexican-Americans with greater confidence in their academic abilities achieved higher GPAs (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004). In a qualitative study examining Latin@ experiences and environmental factors contributing to persistence in college, Hernandez (2000) determined that “successful Latino students who demonstrated a positive mental outlook (described as the belief in and the realization that they possessed the potential to succeed in college)” as the most influential variable to persistence and academic success (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004, p. 40). Latin@s who value education, and receive guidance and mentorship, develop educational resilience that leads to academic success (Ceja, 2004; Hernandez & Lopez, 2004). Ceja suggested that developing resiliency allows Latin@s to “develop a certain consciousness or mental outlook that allows them to form a critical perspective of their surroundings and lived experiences that, in turn, allows them to cope, survive, and in many cases thrive within those realities” (p. 342).

For Latin@s community refers to more than immediate family; it is the people in their lives who provide guidance, mentorship, and encouragement as they circumnavigate their life paths. Hernandez and Lopez (2004) acknowledged “community can take on multiple meanings and may be defined as more than the physical proximity of where one lives or grew up” (p. 52). Ong, Phinney, and Dennis (2006) noted there is a “dynamic interplay between individual and family factors that provides substantive insight into the role of resilience among Latinos college students” (p. 974; see also Arrellano & Padilla, 1996). I suggest there also is a

dynamic interplay between Latin@s with dreams and high aspirations who strongly believe their origins are not their destiny and that with guidance, they can navigate the educational pipeline to academic success.

Summary

Perez and Taylor (2015) emphasized “asset-based frameworks that consider students’ cultural wealth can inform research, policies, and practices intended to increase the success of Latino males at selective postsecondary institutions” (p. 15). I suggest understanding sociocultural influences for Latin@s can move society from an anti-deficit narrative to a celebration of cultural wealth, which will promote Latin@ academic success for males and females.

Yosso’s (2005) model offers a nuanced way of understanding the accumulated knowledge, assets, and resources that are found within Latin@ communities (Perez & Taylor, 2016). Given Yosso’s (2005) model borrows from Anzaldua’s theories, I felt it was appropriate to apply this framework to a study on highly educated borderland Latin@s. While I could have applied other frameworks, Yosso’s (2005) model directly focused this study on the complexity and intersection of sociocultural capital on Latin@ development. Yosso’s (2005) six forms of capital “challenge educators and policymakers to recognize and capitalize on the cultural wealth Latinos possess and use to succeed in higher education” (Perez & Taylor, 2016, p. 5). Yosso (2005) expressed “these various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth” (p. 77). For this study I focused on sociocultural

influences positively impacting the academic identity development of highly educated Latin@s growing up in a Texas-Mexico border town, framed with Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model. This study is important to research on Latin@ academic identity development because it focused on the positive impact of Latin@ sociocultural influences, while noting the experiences of highly educated borderland Latin@s throughout their successful academic journey.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the sociocultural influences that positively impacted the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s through a phenomenological qualitative design. This study sought to contribute to research examining the academic success of Latin@s and encourage education leaders to consider sociocultural influences in their attempts to close achievement gaps among Latin@s in higher education. This study was framed through Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model while utilizing a phenomenological methodology. Two research questions guided this study:

- 1.) What sociocultural and lived experiences influenced the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s?
- 2.) What gender differences exist between the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s?

As noted, the first research question sought to understand the factors that positively influenced the academic identity development of borderland Latin@s in Eagle Pass, Texas and how Latin@s' lived experiences influenced their academic success. Furthermore, the first question sought to determine what points in life strongly influenced the core of borderland Latin@ academic identity and why this may have been the case.

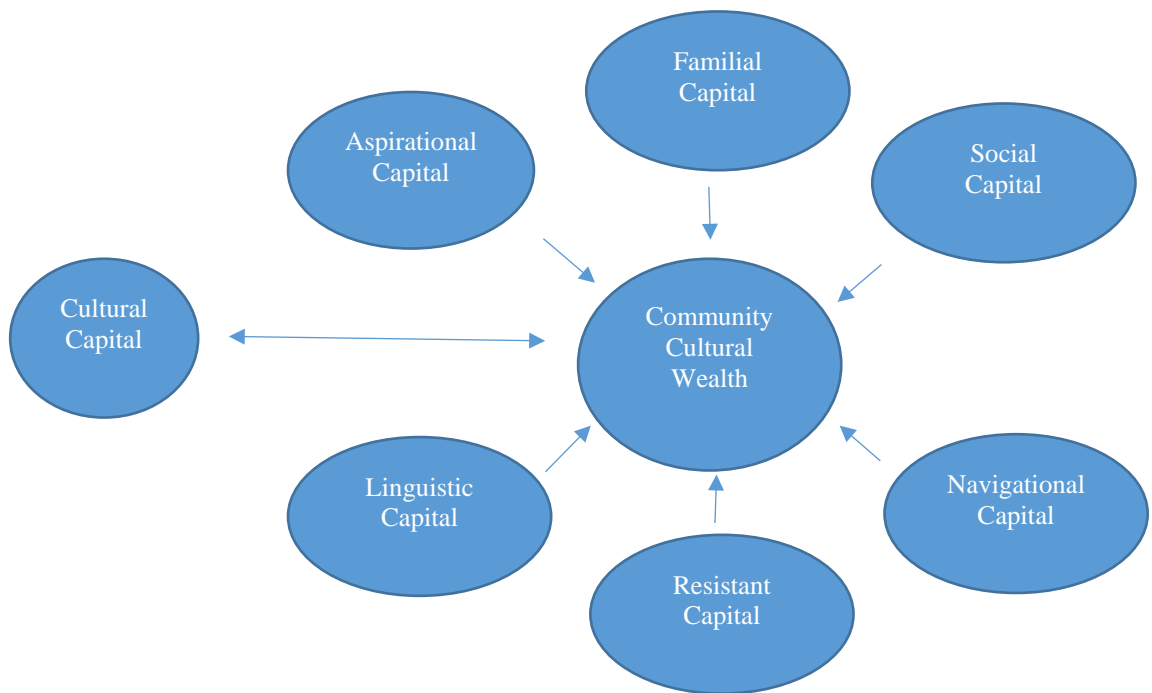
The second research question examined the gender differences among borderland Latinos and Latinas in their quest toward academic success. I sought to understand the variations in in their academic identity development throughout

similar lived experiences. In a larger sense, I hoped to understand what gender differences existed between borderland Latinas and Latinos to better comprehend the gap in educational completion outcomes between the two.

Framework

Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model includes six forms of sociocultural capital, including aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital (See Figure 1). Yosso's (2005) model suggests that cultural capital is in reality a conglomerate of various forms of capital that together encompass community cultural wealth.

Figure 1



Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model

Qualitative Design

Hays and Singh (2011) defined qualitative research as “the study of a phenomenon or research topic in context,” where research questions address the how or what versus the why (p. 4). Creswell (2013) further articulated “in the entire qualitative research process, the researchers keep a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold” (p. 47). I followed a qualitative phenomenological design to draw meaning from and to understand the lived experiences and sociocultural influences contributing to the academic identity development of borderland Latin@s. This qualitative research design is important for identifying the qualities that influence the development of academic identities and the gender differences that exist in this progression. The significant quantifiable differences in educational outcomes among Latinas and Latinos and their white counterparts is well-established; however, insufficient qualitative research exists to determine what, how, and ultimately why this may be occurring (NCES, 2012; NCHEMS, 2012; THECB, 2016).

In addition to following phenomenological best practices, I took an asset-based approach to summarizing my findings and results. This follows current research that represents a departure from deficit narratives that seek to understand why Latin@s are not succeeding academically at acceptable or necessary rates (Brown & Manning, 2007; Carrillo, 2013a, 2013b; Contreras & Gándara, 2006; Perez & Taylor, 2016; Sáenz & Bukoski, 2013; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Yosso, 2005). The deficit narrative picture has already been painted, but additional

qualitative research is needed to understand borderland Latin@s' lived experiences and how these moments are influencing their academic development to the point of highest academic achievements.

Phenomenology

According to Hays and Singh (2011), the goal of phenomenological research is to understand participants' lived experiences. In a phenomenological design, the researcher describes how shared experiences influenced participants' lives while assessing the meaning of these experiences (Hays & Singh, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) detailed the core principles to phenomenological research on human subjects as: a focus on the appearance of things; a concern with wholeness; an effort to seek meanings from appearances; and a commitment to descriptions of experiences.

Because I attempted to assess the impact of Latin@s' borderland environment and lived experiences, a qualitative phenomenological design is appropriate to studying the sociocultural influences impacting their academic identity development. Creswell (2013) noted that a phenomenological approach is appropriate when the researcher seeks to "understand several individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomena" (p. 81). Creswell (2013) further articulated that two general questions are essential in a phenomenological approach: "What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?" and "What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?" (p. 81). The tenets of phenomenology, along with the aforementioned questions, have guided

my data collection, analysis, and approach to understanding how borderland Latin@s' academic identities are developed, as well as my exploration of how their sociocultural influences and lived experiences influenced this development.

Counter-stories. I framed my analysis with an asset-based perspective to interpret counter-stories to comprehend the meaning of the positive sociocultural influences on of highly educated borderland Latin@s' academic identity development. Counter-stories deconstruct the master narrative and “provide conflicting models of understanding social and cultural identities” (Stanley, 2007, p. 14). Through a phenomenological design framed within Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model, I deconstructed participants' counter-stories by examining Yosso's six forms of capital against the participants' lived experiences. As Solorzano and Yosso (2002) noted, “critical race methodology in education challenges biological and cultural deficit stories through counter-storytelling, oral traditions, historiographies, corridos, poetry, films, actors, or by other means” (p. 37). Highly successful borderland Latin@s do not fit the master narrative and their experiences should be told so educators can better understand and guide this group. In addition, studying Latinas allows comparisons within groups to understand why womens' academic success rate exceeds mens'. In particular this study sought to understand borderland Latin@s whose environment would suggest more barriers to success were part of their reality, yet academic outcomes for the participants were counter to the “majoritarian” expected paths.

Study Participants

The 10 participants in this study were five Latinas and five Latinos who were 8th graders between 1996-1998, grew up in the border town of Eagle Pass, Texas, and possess a doctorate, medical doctorate, or juris doctorate degree. This time period corresponds to the initial 2007 longitudinal study on all Texas 8th graders, which indicated a significant gap between the number of Latin@s and white students who earned higher education credentials within 11 years after 8th grade (NCHEMS, 2012). Given the small percentage of Latin@s who earned a higher education credential within 11 years, and the even smaller percentage who earned a graduate degree, an extreme case sampling method with specific criteria was used for this study of highly educated borderland Latin@s (Hays & Singh, 2011; NCES, 2012; NCHEMS, 2012).

Sampling Method

Hays and Singh (2011) defined extreme case sampling as selecting those participants whose experiences were the most extreme — positive or negative. Criterion sampling is defined as meeting an “important, predetermined criterion” (Hays & Singh, 2011, p. 170). For this qualitative design, I studied highly educated borderland Latin@s, who were categorized as having the most positive academic experience compared with their counterparts, as previously noted. The sample was based on the criteria, as noted, of growing up a borderland Latin@ from Eagle Pass, Texas, being in 8th grade between 1996-1998, and completing a doctorate, juris doctorate, or medical doctorate degree.

I drew upon my online social network circles, including Facebook and LinkedIn connections, to identify potential participants who met sampling criteria. I searched these groups for individuals who were approximately my age and to learn their occupations. I sent messages to those who matched my sample criteria detailing my dissertation and asking if they were willing to take part. I reached out to about 15 people and seven quickly agreed to participate. I followed up with the remaining contacts a few more times until three more agreed for a total of 10 participants.

Sample size. Hays and Singh (2011) noted “the goal of qualitative inquiry is to gain depth of understanding about a topic area, rather than the breadth that is often the goal of quantitative research” (p. 172). Creswell (2013) suggested in a phenomenological design, most researchers should strive for a sample size up to 10 participants, although phenomenological studies can range from as little as 3 participants to hundreds. In qualitative design, the research question and tradition can help determine sample size. Given my phenomenological stance and a small overall population, I aimed for a sample size of 10 to 12 Latin@s, with five to six Latinas and five to six Latinos. As noted, my sample size was 10 (five each of Latinas and Latinos). I aimed for a balance of Latinas and Latinos because I sought to understand gender differences between the two and I needed an equal representation to create meaning and understanding among them.

Site description. I studied highly educated borderland Latin@s who grew up in Eagle Pass, Texas, in Maverick County. Eagle Pass is along the state’s southwest border adjacent to the Mexican city of Piedras Negras. In 2014, the Eagle Pass

population was 28,329, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015). Of this total, 96 percent were Hispanic; 36 percent lacked a high school diploma; 28 percent lived below poverty, with a median household income of \$33,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). However, Eagle Pass, as a city, has nationally had one of the highest number of graduates from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the past 30 years and has produced several residents with doctorates, including “de los Santos, Hernandez, Ramirez, Towns, Calderon, Midobuche, Montano, Olivares, Trevino, and Chavira” (Chahin, 2017; Chahin, personal communication, March 22, 2017). In Eagle Pass “families provided sustenance, emotional security, and a sense of belonging” which allowed many individuals to refrain from a deficit-narrative perspective, focus on the positive resources available, and “cultivated a sense of pride” in their ethnic community (Chahin, 2017, p. 7, p. 9).

Being a former Eagle Pass resident influenced my decision to choose this site, as I have questioned my own experiences in academia and my sociocultural influences had on my academic and career pathway. In general, Eagle Pass is an environment with a struggling community based on several quantitative measures, with overall low education attainment levels, high concentrations of poverty, and low income levels, yet many former residents have achieved doctorates, medical doctorates, and juris doctorate degrees (Census, 2015; Chahin, personal communication, March 22, 2017).

Eagle Pass is also a community that was strongly affected by the Chicano movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, given its close proximity to Crystal

City, Texas, the birth site of the Raza Unida Party. In 1969, Jose Angel Gutierrez established the Winter Garden Project (WGP) in his hometown of Crystal City, Texas in hopes of organizing Chicanos politically and led mass walk outs protesting educational inequities (Navarro, 1995). By 1970 Gutierrez established the Raza Unida Party in hopes of “making politics more effective for Chicanos” (Navarro, 1995, p. 215). In 1972 the first national convention of the Raza Unida Party was organized by national Chicano activists including Jose Angel Gutierrez, Juan Jose Pena, Reies Lopez Tijerina, Ramon Tijerina, and Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzalez (Gutierrez and Gutierrez, 2013). In the 1970s, Gutierrez and the Raza Unida Party gained control of the Crystal City school board and city council, spurring Raza Unida Party candidates throughout Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and California (Cabán et al., 1994). Eagle Pass was one of these communities that began seeing local Latin@s run for the school board and city council, win seats on these boards, and ultimately expose the younger generation to key community leaders that looked like them and represented them (J. Martinez, personal communication, April 27, 2017). Today many of the local community leaders are fellow borderland Latin@s, thus culturally representing their community (J. Martinez, personal communication, April 27, 2017). The participants in this study were the children of parents that experienced the Chicano Movement firsthand and witnessed its effects, thus this itself could be a separate study worth exploring.

Additional qualitative research is needed on borderland regions such as this to highlight how these sociocultural influences positively impacted academic success

for many highly educated students. Eagle Pass is a site worth researching because it has a growing population that could potentially produce many more of the countries' future Latin@ leaders. Researchers, educators, administrators, and policymakers would benefit from studying highly educated borderland Latin@s from Eagle Pass, Texas, to influence systemic changes that will improve the overall outcomes for the large population of Latin@s in borderland communities.

Data Collection

Creswell (2013) noted “qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than rely on a single data source” (p. 45). For purposes of this qualitative phenomenological design, participants completed an emailed a demographic questionnaire, participated in a first interview via face-to-face, Skype, or phone, and participated second interviews via Skype or phone. Each participant first were emailed a summary of my proposal, a consent form, and the research questionnaire. I asked each to return the signed consent form and the completed questionnaire and indicate possible dates for the first interview. Scheduling was a daunting task because the participants and I had full calendars; often interviews were scheduled and then rescheduled at the last minute.

For the first interview, participants were asked to share any relevant artifacts they felt contributed to their academic development and lived experiences as borderland Latin@s. Personal artifacts such as letters, memory boxes, and photographs, are records of the participants' lived experiences and the intent was that

they represented a form of data collection that would provide insights not revealed through the interview process (Creswell, 2013). Including participant artifacts fits with the phenomenological approach and is aligned with Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model that suggests understanding Latin@ cultural capital requires a nuanced multi-faceted approach. After conducting the interviews, however, it was evident that the artifact question was misinterpreted by some and forgotten by others, as most of the answers failed to provide any meaningful data for analysis purposes.

Creswell (2013) indicated phenomenological studies can be streamlined with only one in-depth interview, but most phenomenological designed- studies include multiple in-depth interviews and more than one form of data collection. Siedman (2013) suggested a three-interview format for phenomenological interviewing: The first interview sets the context for the participants' lived experiences, while the second and third interview allow time for reflection that can provide deeper insight and assign meaning to their experiences within the context established. For purposes of this study, I followed Siedman's approach to phenomenological interviewing. Because of time constraints and travel budget restrictions, I merged the second and third interview, an alternative structure Siedman admits may be necessary because of study conditions. Seidman (2013) noted follow-up interviews allow participants to "reconstruct the details of their experience with the context in which it occurs" and encourages participants "to reflect on the meaning their experiences holds for them" (p. 21). Unfortunately because of scheduling issues, five of the 10 second interviews were conducted immediately after the first interview. I hoped to have at least a few

days' time between interviews to reflect on discussions, but for half of the participants it proved too difficult to get on their calendar multiple times. Nonetheless, the multi-interview format is central to a phenomenological approach trying to understand and create meaning from various individuals (Creswell, 2013, Hays & Singh, 2011).

Table 1 summarizes the four forms of data collection used in the study and the respective research questions they sought to answer.

Table 1

Forms of Data Collection and Research Questions

Data Collection Type	Applicable Research Question
Demographic Questionnaire	RQ2
Face-to-face Interview #1	RQ1, RQ2
Virtual Interview #2	RQ1, RQ2
Relevant Artifacts with Summary	RQ1, RQ2

Note. Items are included as appendices.

I gathered information primarily through two semi-structured interviews, which allowed for in-depth conversations where the sequence and pace of interview questions was modified to better describe each participants' shared experiences (Hays & Singh, 2011). This data collection method "allows the researcher to obtain data in the participants' own words from which the researcher could then develop insight on how participants interpret a particular phenomenon" (Ceja, 2004, p. 343). In addition, direct observation provided a better understanding of participants' emotions and the level of impact of their shared experiences. Again, my intent was for participants to share, if available, any artifacts (pictures, newspaper articles, work

assignments, etc.) that spoke of their lived experiences as borderland Latin@s and contributed to the development of their academic identity. Ultimately, I believe participants were too busy to give much serious thought to this request, as only one participant shared an artifact.

Questionnaire. Prior to scheduling the first interview, participants received a questionnaire (see Appendix A for Demographic Questionnaire) through email requesting the following demographic information: name, gender, age, highest degree attained, colleges/universities attended, and current occupation. Participants also were asked to reflect on and share any artifacts that spoke to their lived experiences in preparation for future interview discussions. Once again the latter artifact proved to be futile.

First and second interview. As noted previously, I followed the common phenomenological approach of a multi-interview format, and in particular, followed Siedman's (2013) alternate suggested approach to two in-depth phenomenological interviews (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, each participant participated in two 45-75 minute face-to-face/Skype/phone interviews (see Appendix B for Interview Questions). I suggested participants choose a comfortable space for the interview, possibly their home or workplace. My expectation was that having each participant choose a familiar environment would promote a relaxed atmosphere. Except for one participant who completed the interview in a car via Skype, most participants were interviewed in their home or workplace. In accordance with Siedman's (2013)

approach, the first interview sought to reconstruct participants' early sociocultural experiences and academic success as borderland Latin@s.

As most study participants were living across Texas and presented scheduling challenges, second interviews took place via Skype (eight participants) and by phone (two participants). In fact, one participant was outside of Texas and another was out of the country. As noted, I intended for participants to have a few days to a week to reflect before the second interview in hopes of expanding on their lived experiences within the context of the discussion. Due to scheduling conflicts, however, the second interviews for five participants had to immediately follow the first.

Interview questions were created to directly address the research questions relating to borderland Latin@s developing successful academic identities, their sociocultural influences, and secondarily answer the gender differences. The interview questions included questions about their childhoods and progressed to questions dealing with their K-12, college, and professional experiences (see Appendix B for Interview Questionnaires).

Data Analysis

I used a phenomenological approach to analyze interview transcripts to create meaning and understanding from their lived experiences and to determine how their sociocultural influences positively impacted their academic success trajectory. I applied an asset-based approach to understanding and creating meaning from my participants' counter-stories. Bernal (2002) noted "an important component of using counter-stories includes not only telling nonmajoritarian stories but also learning

how to listen and hear the messages in counter-stories” (p. 116). Bernal argued counter-stories “can also serve as a pedagogical tool that allows one to better understand and appreciate the unique experiences and responses of students of color through a deliberate, conscious, and open type of listening” (p. 116).

With phenomenological research, the goal is to “deeply understand a phenomenon’s essence” by trying to understand the meaning of participants’ lived experiences (Hays & Singh, 2011, p. 354). Hays and Singh (2011) noted there are four primary components of phenomenological data analysis, which I followed. These are bracketing, horizontalization, textural description, and structural description. Bracketing calls for the researcher to reflect on his or her own bias and assumptions about the purpose of the study. Horizontalization refers to the process of beginning with large categories of text. Textural description “strives to understand the meaning and depth of the essence of the experience” (Hays & Singh, 2011, p. 355). Structural description identifies potential meanings and relationships within the textural description.

In particular, I followed Moustaka’s (1994) modified phenomenological data analysis technique of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen (Hays & Singh, 2011). First, each statement should be considered with respect to the significance of the experience and all relevant statements recorded. Horizontalization then follows by listing each non-repetitive, non-overlapping statement and clustering into themes. A textural descriptions follows by synthesizing findings and reflecting on the structures of the

experiences. Finally, a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience is constructed.

I used the transcription service Rev.com to transcribe all 20 interview sessions. I reviewed all transcriptions for accuracy and made edits where needed, particularly where Spanish and Spanglish were spoken. Once transcribed and edited, I used the qualitative software Dedoose to help analyze participants' narratives.

I initially went through each participant's narrative and considered each of their statements with respect to significance for the description of their academic experience as highly educated borderland Latin@s, while trying to remove my own bias (bracketing). In the initial pass I highlighted and labeled in Dedoose all relevant statements. In the second pass of all participant narratives and respective highlighted text, I began labeling each statement with a code that spoke to its relevance. This allowed me to take large bodies of text into workable nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements (horizontalization). In the third pass of all coding statements, I began to relate and cluster the invariant meaning of these narratives into themes. Once themes were established and subcodes defined, I was able to pull all relevant statements into a Word document and begin synthesizing the information to support the findings sections of this study. I then began to try to make meaning and create understanding of the experiences being shared (textural description). Lastly I tried to make meaning and understand relationships from the textural description to properly share the findings from this phenomenological study (structural description).

Bracketing Researcher Bias and Positionality

As previously noted, a primary component of phenomenological data analysis requires the researcher to strongly consider his or her bias and assumptions so as to create meaning from participants' lived experiences, rather than their own. I used bracketing to account for my own bias and assumptions about the study to ensure trustworthiness and quality observations from my participants. I consider myself a highly educated borderland Latino male. My educational and professional trajectory is counter to the common narrative of many of my Latino counterparts. Growing up in a small border town strongly influenced my collegiate and professional experiences, as I often found myself between worlds that seemed counter to one another. For robust data analysis, I applied my lived experiences and Latin@ critical race positionality to relate to the participants, but bracketed my positionality to tell my participants' lived experiences, and made meaning from what evolved from their words rather than my own. Hays and Sing (2011) noted "phenomenology as a practice involves researchers approaching a phenomenon with a fresh perspective, as if viewing it for the first time, through the eyes of participants who have direct, immediate experience with it" (p. 50).

To further ensure trustworthiness I shared my findings summary with each participant to confirm I accurately depicted their lived experiences and reflections as well as my assumptions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated member-checking contributes to the trustworthiness and credibility of a qualitative study. I allowed

participants to confirm that my interpretation was an accurate depiction of their lived experiences.

I knew some participants to a degree because we attended the same high school. I did not know eight of the 10 participants well enough to go into the study with predetermined dispositions. I did know two of the participants to a greater extent, however their stories were too strong to not include in this particular study. I do not feel these two interviews differed from the others. For the most part, I knew the participants by name and as social media contacts, but not well enough to delve into their life stories without this qualitative phenomenological approach. My criteria-based sampling method determined my participants and bracketing helped mitigate any preconceptions.

Delimitations. I chose to study highly educated borderland Latin@s, meaning this phenomenological study is bounded by this context. I chose to delve into the lived experiences of highly educated borderland Latin@s because I feel researchers, educators, and policymakers should know more about academically successful Latin@s in this area. The Texas-Mexico borderlands are heavily populated by Latin@s and the more we know about the positive contributors towards academic success, the more asset-based systemic change can begin to occur in the region and beyond. It is important to note that while I focused on Eagle Pass, there are multiple Texas border areas, including El Paso, Laredo, and cities in the Rio Grande Valley that would be viable research site alternatives. This study hopefully

will contribute to the growing body of research surrounding borderland Latin@ academic identity development and success.

Confidentiality and IRB Approval

Anonymity and confidentiality was ensured through use of consent forms and pseudonyms. Names were removed from notes, transcripts, and all data sources, and participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect confidentiality. Audio files, transcriptions, and all file documents, were individually encrypted and password-protected, as well as stored in a secure password-protected environment (laptop and online). All documentation and analysis excluded any personally identifiable information of study participants.

I submitted my proposal for IRB approval upon moving to candidacy. The IRB application included a copy of the proposal, interview questionnaires, and consent forms. I was approved by IRB as an exempt study about three weeks after submission. Participants were provided an informed consent form to sign prior to the research detailing the intent, processes, and expected outcomes of the study and their participation. All participants were given the option of leaving the study at any point for any reason.

Chapter 4 – Summary of Findings

The purpose of the phenomenological research study was to explicate a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of highly educated borderland Latin@s in Eagle Pass, Texas and explore the positive impact the sociocultural influences had on their academic identity development. This chapter presents the findings of this inquiry and will include: 1) a summary of participants; 2) participant narratives and presentation of emergent themes; and 3) an interpretation of themes in relation to the theoretical framework. The research questions are directly answered through the major findings discussion in Chapter 5.

As noted in the previous chapter, interviews were conducted by the researcher primarily in-person and through face-to-face Skype sessions. Two interviews were conducted via phone. There were 10 participants, each interviewed twice. The second interview built upon the first interview. Five interviews were done back-to-back because of scheduling conflicts with busy participants. Eight participants were living in Texas, one resided outside of Texas, and one lived outside the United States. The semi-structured interviews promoted a conversation between the participant and researcher.

Summary of Participants

The participants in this study are highly educated borderland Latinas and Latinos that grew up in Eagle Pass, Texas and are all in their early 30s. It is important to note that none of the participants self-identified as Latin@s, but they

had varied responses. Table 2 below summarizes participant names and highest education degree. A deeper description of each participant follows.

Table 2

Participant Summary

Participant Name	Highest Degree
Alicia	Ph.D
Bibi	Ph.D
Carmen	MD
David	JD
Jaime	JD
Laura	Ph.D
Mario	MD/Ph.D
Pablo	JD
Pedro	JD
Valeria	MD

Alicia

Alicia is a highly educated borderland Latina who self-identifies as Hispanic, Latina, and Mexican-American. She has a doctorate of philosophy degree from a public university and bachelor's degree from a private university. Alicia grew up in Eagle Pass and moved to urban cities to complete her undergraduate and graduate studies. Alicia currently is a senior research and development chemist.

Alicia was encouraged early in life to be a reader. She shared that one summer during her elementary school years her mother challenged her to read 100 books and she succeeded. Alicia is still an avid reader and lifelong learner. She

attributes much of her success to parents who consistently pushed her to do better and be better. Alicia stated:

At the heart of all this and the heart of everything it doesn't matter geographically where you come from it's more like the core of your being. The core of the hard work and the drive and the need for success...

Alicia's parents were very supportive and open to what she wanted to do in her life, but made it clear to her that college was a must. Regardless of the circumstances, Alicia was expected to attend and finish college.

My parents pretty much told us from day one we were going to college. There was no question that we were all going to go to college. My parents both got their college degrees by taking night classes and so they took night classes for ten years or eight years or something and finished both of their degrees...(They stated) I don't care what happens you are going to college.

Bibi

Bibi is a highly educated borderland Latina who self-identifies as Hispanic. She has a doctorate of philosophy degree from a private university, a master's degree from a public university, and a bachelor's degree from a public university. Bibi grew up in Eagle Pass and moved to urban cities to pursue her undergraduate and graduate studies. Bibi is currently an administrator and associate professor.

Bibi knew in high school she was going to go to college because she didn't want to work as hard as she did as a teenager, working "out in the hot sun." She didn't want to work as hard as her parents, who were not around as much because "they worked a lot." She noted that she became independent early in life and pushed herself to succeed.

They (parents) never asked me my grades, really interesting. I was pretty independent at least when it came to things like that. They took my word as face value, like if I said I'm doing good, everything's good. It's not that they didn't push me, I just pushed myself I guess.

Bibi's mother obtained her GED late in life and her father had a middle school education, so she felt they did not know the questions to ask about school and education. Nonetheless, she noted that her parents were there for her.

Communication with them increased when she left for college and grew as she got older. Bibi stated "I talk to them every day. I can't miss a call with them." Bibi also shared a story of when her parents dropped her off for her freshman year in college. Her mom cried about leaving her alone, and told her she had to call them.

That's what was expected. They were going to drop me off. I was going to start school. I was going to call them on a regular basis and let them know how things are going and things like that, but that was the relationship.

Carmen

Carmen is a highly educated borderland Latina who self-identifies as Mexican-American. She has a medical doctorate from a private university and a bachelor's degree from a private university. Carmen grew up in Eagle Pass and moved to urban cities for her undergraduate and graduate studies. Carmen is now a pediatrician at a hospital.

Carmen attributed her academic success to working hard and doing whatever it took to succeed, even if many times she found herself having to catch up. This started early in elementary school, when she knew little English and continued later

in her undergraduate/medical school years when she felt as if she was constantly running from behind. In describing her post-secondary years, Carmen noted:

I studied. I had no life. I think I was determined that I was going to be successful. I think you have to have that just wanting it, and I just studied, and I studied, and I studied. If it took them an hour and it took me six hours, I don't care, I was going to do it for six hours and I was going to catch up to them.

Carmen's father died when she was a toddler and she was raised primarily by her mother, but her future was strongly influenced by both parents' expectations of working hard, getting an education, and obtaining a professional career.

We grew up with just my mom. Since the very beginning my mom said, "Your dad wanted you to be a doctor," and he wanted my sister to be a lawyer. That didn't happen but she was since the very beginning, "Your job is go to school and that's it. You are going to go to school, you are going to do well." I think that was key. Since the very beginning it was like, "You are going to get an education no matter what."

David

David is a highly educated borderland Latino who self-identifies as Hispanic. He holds a juris doctorate degree from a public law school and bachelor's degree from a public university. David grew up in Eagle Pass and moved to urban cities for his undergraduate and graduate studies. David now practices corporate and commercial law.

Both of David's parents are college-educated and worked as educators. While being successful in school or going to college was never explicitly required of David, education was always a topic of conversation in his life.

I don't think they ever pressed upon us that we had to go to college. I think it was understood. They both went to college as part of government program and came out of school with very little debt, which is how they were able to become teachers. I think education was always an issue for us. It was always at the forefront of almost any discussion. It was operating in the background or the undercurrent of most of our discussions.

David noted the importance of hard work as being essential to reaching goals, regardless circumstances. He stated “You work hard, you put your nose to the grindstone, and you just hope that your work can speak for itself.” Guided by his parents educational and life values, David felt that it is important to always “do good work and do it well.”

Jaime

Jaime is a highly educated borderland Latino who self-identifies as Hispanic. He has a juris doctorate degree from a private law school and a bachelor's degree from a private university. Jaime grew up in Eagle Pass and moved to urban cities for his undergraduate and graduate studies. Jaime is now a partner at a private law firm.

Jaime was strongly influenced to do well in school, and to be a good student and a good person. Jaime's mother passed away when he was 15, but until then she always emphasized the importance of a good education. Jaime indicated “She was the person that took me to school, picked me up, and always told me... ‘Hit the books. I want you to do well. I want you to be successful. School is very important’.” Jaime's father showed him the value of hard work and modeled the importance of a parent wanting better for their kids by being supportive and encouraging.

Now my father is just a hardworking man. He doesn't have a high school or college education, but as far as education, he always told me...*Study so you don't have to work as much as I do or be out in the sun...*He wanted me to do good, but he would just tell me, "*Do good in school,*" like in general. "*I want you to succeed.*" That's part of the reason my motivation is him. Seeing him work hard and have so little, and I just wanted to make him proud.

Laura

Laura is a highly educated borderland Latina who self-identifies as Hispanic. She has a doctorate of philosophy degree from a public medical school and bachelor's degrees from a private university. Laura grew up in Eagle Pass and moved to urban cities for her undergraduate and graduate studies. Laura is currently a stay-at-home mom.

A majority of Laura's family, including parents and grandparents, are college-educated, with both her parents having master's degrees. College was always "just expected."

They didn't really set expectations. I was the youngest of three and I was the overachiever, so it wasn't a conversation that we ever really had because it was understood that there was a common goal and this is just how my life's supposed to turn out.

Laura's first year in college was not as smooth a transition as her expectation to attend college, but through perseverance and a positive change in mindset she was able to succeed both academically and professionally. Laura reflected:

Don't get hung up on being from a border. For me, I think that was a huge psychological hindrance. Not an excuse but it always placed doubt in my mind as to whether or not I deserved to be somewhere or whether or not I had the chops to be somewhere. I think I always felt like well maybe I wasn't prepared well enough for this. It's like you know what? You might not be, but you've got a basic level and you've got to make yourself from there.

Mario

Mario is a highly educated borderland Latino who self-identifies as Mexican American. He has a medical doctorate and doctorate of philosophy from a private university and bachelor's degree from a public university. Mario grew up in Eagle Pass, moved in high school to another small town, and moved to urban cities for his undergraduate and graduate studies. Mario now practices medicine at a large research hospital and teaches at a private university.

Mario was raised by a single mother and grew up in the projects of Eagle Pass. Mario began working in his early teens to help support his family.

I grew up single parent household with my mom. I know that since I was the age of 14 I was working at a ... 13, 14, I was working at a convenience store, where I used to get paid cash to stock the freezers. I started paying rent at that age. There was a sense of needing to contribute to the household early on. Education was never a ... I'd come home from school and I'd have to go to work at night, I'd go to work from like 7 until 11 p.m. or something, stocking beer and sodas and stuff.

Mario's mother didn't push him to do well in school, as "there was no expectation beyond being a good person and providing for your family." Mario attributes much of his success to his friends and his own desire to do good so that he could help others.

There was a sense of friends that always motivate me. I have to be honest, I think I responded well to positive affirmation, I respond well to positive feedback more so than negative feedback. It was just something I wanted, man. I think I became a bit more ambitious with time and I felt like there's a lot of stuff that needs to happen out there, there's a lot of unfairness that's out there. It's like a sense of service, it's like I owe back just because of where I came from and the stuff that I've been able to achieve for that with the help of others. It's just sort of just that I should give back.

Pablo

Pablo is a highly educated borderland Latino who self-identifies as Hispanic. He has a juris doctorate from a public law school and bachelor's degree from a public university. Pablo grew up in Eagle Pass and moved to urban cities for his undergraduate and graduate studies. Pablo is currently a senior contract analyst.

Pablo was raised by his mother and grandmother and was the first in his family to graduate from college. He stated that he was not pushed to succeed academically and in fact didn't communicate much with his mother about his life, but he knew she cared and he knew he wanted to do good to have more.

My mom, my grandma too, they both raised me. My mom, I don't recall talking to her about what the goals were. I'm the first ... My brother went for a semester, but I'm the first in my family to go to and graduate from college. She wasn't really ... Was she made to do more? I think she just simply trusted that I would figure it out, or that I would get there, going to college and pursuing a continuing education.

Early in his undergraduate studies and during his law school years, Pablo struggled with a sense of belonging, as he constantly felt he was not good enough. Pablo still struggles with the idea of doing so much more and finding what he deems successful.

Yeah, I wouldn't call it success. I got by, and that's the problem. The whole being unprepared for it, maybe I just also didn't belong, in at least the UT law school. They were the smartest people I've ever seen. They were incredibly brilliant. I was just dumbfounded at how brilliant these people were...I'd never ... I hadn't been around such brilliant people before, so it was intimidating, and it was very challenging and rewarding in a sense that I got to see what real smart people were like. I thought I was smart, but nowhere near those people. It was eye-opening, and it was fun. It was good. It was good to see them.

Pedro

Pedro is a highly educated borderland Latino who self-identifies as Hispanic. He has a juris doctorate from a private law school and a bachelor's degree from a public university. Pedro grew up in Eagle Pass and moved to urban cities for his undergraduate and graduate studies. Pedro now practices government law.

For Pablo there was never an expectation to go to college, or even to do well in school. He knew early on, however, that he wanted more from life than what he saw around him — individuals working in the fields for little pay. Pedro's mother had a middle school education and his father earned a GED and an associate's degree when Pedro was young.

I have a newspaper clipping from 1990's from my dad. When my dad appears in a newspaper in Minnesota and he is holding like this GED and they had an article about him back then, about how ... like even though he was a day laborer in the fields he was trying hard to get his degree. I remember that year he went to technical school, got an associate's at the time. For some reason I've always kept it. I guess to show that, yes, we can. Like in our family, we have the capability to do something. We have the capability to actually go out and get educated and do something with our lives as opposed to being a loser and getting caught and going to prison for something stupid.

Pedro attributes much of his academic success to his inner circle of friends who pushed each other to be better and do great things. He iterated an important part of success is having a support system, family or friends, who truly “want to see you succeed.”

To me, like the biggest piece of advice is, pick your friends closely. Carefully. Try and make sure ... because to me, I was blessed that I had like a support system of friends, like in my case friends who all have a mutual interest, all were interested in going to school, were interested in getting their degrees, having a career, like a legitimate career.

Valeria

Valeria is a highly educated borderland Latina who self-identifies as Mexican-American. She has a doctorate of medicine from a public medical school and bachelor's degrees from a private university. Valeria grew up in Eagle Pass and moved to urban cities for her undergraduate and graduate studies. Valeria is currently a psychiatrist and clinical instructor.

Education was always an important topic in Valeria's home, as both of her parents are college-educated teachers. The expectation to do well in school and in life in general, was instilled early on.

In our house you did your homework. You went to school. There was no question of not doing anything. It was expected. It was normal. They weren't overly pushy about schoolwork. They weren't incredibly strict. It was just you were expected to do it and you did it. Well, they both went to college so we were all expected to go to college.

Valeria attributes her academic success to her parent's encouragement and to her own hard work in applying both the academic ability she knew she had, and the abilities she would have to develop to achieve success. Valeria noted the importance of grit and motivation in whether someone succeeds.

There's lots of smart people who aren't successful because they never applied it, or who have talent but don't become successful because they didn't practice. Like you might have talent in piano, but if you never practice it, then you won't be strong at it and won't be getting it right. If you're intelligent and you don't do the work and play by the rules and set goals, then you're not going to get anywhere. You need both the talent and intelligence but you also need the drive and the desire and the motivation to go. One of them is you're born with, the other one you have to work on it.

Participant Narratives and Emergent Themes

The following section details participant narratives organized by four emergent themes that arose from the individual interviews. These are familial affirmation, aspirational success, borderland and cultural influence, and sense of belonging.

Appendices C-F summarize the 95 codes that arose in the initial participant narrative analysis where each table, in order of highest frequency, are the subsequent four themes that arose from thematic analysis. There were 768 highlighted narratives resulting from the 95 codes, which ultimately provided the four emergent themes.

Familial Affirmation

The theme of familial affirmation was uncovered through participant's continual mention of the importance of advice and closeness of friends, parents, family, and mentors. In particular, a majority of participants mentioned the value of friendship and family influence on their successful academic identity development. Within these topics arose discussions about support systems, social relationships, and the balance of juggling life expectations and commitments.

Family. Having high expectations from parents early in life made a difference for Carmen, who from her earliest memories recalled her mom telling her she was going to be a doctor. This notion of being a doctor became important for Carmen throughout her life, as growing up she was "always entertained by the idea of maybe I will be a doctor." Carmen's mother was her biggest motivator, instilling in her the importance and value of education. Carmen noted "It was kind of like one

of those values that you just, it's kind of ingrained and then you become crazy too and you just want to do it.”

Jaime’s father was his biggest motivation to succeed academically. Jaime noted “I wanted to do good. I wanted my dad to be proud of me.” Even though Jaime’s father never asked about the courses he took, or what he did when he was in college, he encouraged him to “do good in school” and be successful. Jaime noted that he keeps a picture of his father working in the fields in his desk at his legal office to always keep him motivated. Jaime stated “Every now and then I'll take a look at it and I'll be like, "Hey, you know what. My dad works hard so this is nothing." Jaime valued his father and described him as “just a hardworking man.”

He doesn't have a high school or college education, but as far as education, he always told me, "Study so you don't have to work as much as I do or be out in the sun." He does manual labor. He works at the cemetery cutting grass and digging the graves and stuff. My dad, like I said, he's just a hardworking man...Seeing him work hard and have so little, and I just wanted to make him proud.

Laura noted that her father grew up in the *colonias*, the projects, in Eagle Pass. The people he surrounded himself with went to college, however, so there was never an excuse not to aspire college for himself and for his daughter. Laura stated that the goal was to attend college and “you just figured out a way.”

Mario stated his father was never in his life and his mother kept the family together. She expected him to be a good person and work hard, but there was never a clear expectation to go to college. He shared that when he was admitted to a

prestigious Ivy League medical school, his mother had not heard of the school and did not grasp what it meant from an education perspective. Mario shared:

I think a lot of people were congratulating my mom and she didn't, at the time I think she was like, she didn't understand what college meant. She was obviously very grateful, but she was like, you know, "People say it's a really good school, and so I'm sure you've worked hard to get there." It was different, there was no expectation beyond being a good person and providing for your family.

The importance of educated parents with professional jobs is seen through Valeria, who understood education was not just an expectation and the norm as one grew older. Having high expectations from parents and valuing their judgments pushed the participants to excel. Valeria noted her parents were her biggest motivations to be successful. She stated:

I think my parents for sure were the biggest motivators. They're both teachers. They're both college educated. In our house you did your homework. You went to school. There was no question of not doing anything. It was expected. It was normal. They weren't overly pushy about schoolwork. They weren't incredibly strict. It was just you were expected to do it and you did it.

David emphasized the significant influence his parents had on his academic and professional success. Both of David's parents were college-educated and education was expected of him, success was expected. David shared:

For us, regardless of job or school, it was always bloom where you're planted. You may have gotten this rotten hand in life, but what are you going to make of it and where are you going to go from here? I think that is a result of where my parent's influence has been, is to say okay, that's great, but just be a work horse. Put your head down and do the work and people will take notice.

Mentors. The importance of mentors and guiding figures in one's life has been documented to affect one's development, just as negative events can vastly

impact one's path (Ceja, 2004; Hernandez & Lopez, 2004). Mario shared a story of his third grade teacher who initially thought he didn't deserve to be in her class because English was not his first language. He recalled that she was quite upset at him during their first writing assignment, telling him that in her class "he better do this, better do that." He did not understand why she was so mad at him when she didn't yet know him. In Mario's case, this third grade teacher later apologized to him and as the year progressed gave him extra attention to ensure he was learning and wasn't bored. Mario noted this affected his confidence because the story stayed with him throughout his life.

When determining whether to pursue a higher education credential, family members, friends, and mentors who are educated professionals can offer important guidance about the undertaking. Valeria's advice to those considering medical school was to learn what the profession is really about by shadowing doctors, talking to medical students, and reaching out beyond their comfort zone to ask questions and learn from professionals in the field.

David spoke of a faculty mentor who guided him through college, serving as a voice of reason and a mother figure to him. He explained:

I'm not sure she did anything specific, I think she was just this motherly figure in the program that just provided this reassurance and this calming presence or voice. When you thought the end of the world was near, she would put everything in perspective and reassure you that you could work through it. If you thought it was something completely urgent, she would not discourage you from the urgency of what you thought it was and share in that urgency and try and get you an answer or a resource. I think it was just a comforting presence that she provided.

David stated his mentor emphasized that college was his opportunity to reinvent himself. While David did not plan on changing who he was, he noted that the idea resonated. The discussion about expanding his horizons led him to pursue varied friendships and opportunities. During his freshman year he did not venture much beyond his group of childhood friends. He explained, “It's not to say I thought it was anything negative. I certainly thought there was more to be had. There was a growth there that could be explored.” David stated that he felt it important to surround oneself with like-minded people who encourage each other to succeed and celebrate each other's accomplishments. David noted “I think it's important to have that influence in your life apart from family.”

Friends. Mario said it was important to be surrounded by people who motivated one to be better and do better. He shared:

I think I just surrounded myself with people who had ambition and who had drive and who wanted to succeed and that just kind of, you feed off each other and it's helpful. I think it matters a lot who you surround yourself with, your friends and mentors and colleagues and stuff. I would say for people who are really interested, just find people who do what you want to do or who are interested in doing what you're interested in doing and then work together. Your chances of success are higher if you have a group of people going towards the same goal.

Mario felt he always had friends who motivated him. He stated “I have to be honest, I think I responded well to positive affirmation, I respond well to positive feedback more so than negative feedback.” Mario expressed that through positive friendships he became more ambitious. He realized that, regardless of his origins, he was

obligated to give back to others as he became more educated and because of those who pushed him to excel. Mario stated:

I think I became a bit more ambitious with time and I felt like there's a lot of stuff that needs to happen out there, there's a lot of unfairness that's out there. It's like a sense of service, it's like I owe back just because of where I came from and the stuff that I've been able to achieve for that with the help of others. It's just sort of just that I should give back.

Pedro passionately argued one must “pick your friends wisely” throughout life as they are an important factor in how one progresses as a person. Pedro stated “you need to have your support system where positive people who have the same interests, who actually want to better themselves. If you don't have that it is not going to work.”

Leaving family for the first time is difficult for many first-generation Latin@s who deal with competing priorities of family and sharing their life, but also living their own. Bibi's experience was that many Eagle Pass parents made their children feel as if they were being disowned for choosing to do their own thing and not always attending certain holidays or family events. Bibi felt her family understood her college experience, however, and ultimately her professional experience. Ultimately, if she missed an important family occasion, “it's not a big deal” and “they don't guilt me into going places.” Bibi noted this understanding while she was away at college and now as an educational administrator has made their bond closer, noting “I feel like they want to see me and I want to see them and it's an opportunity for us.” Bibi noted that college friendships were important to help her cope with being away from home and learning how to succeed. Bibi shared:

Actually I was part of a sorority. That helped me a little bit more. It was a sorority specifically for Latina women. The biggest part was on leadership and service to others. I feel like that was a big part of what helped me (living away from home). I was able to have that group of girls where if I needed help with something, if I needed help figuring something out, they were there for me. If I wasn't doing great in school, they'd be able to help me.

Pride. Bibi shared that when she received her doctorate, her parents didn't really comprehend the significance of the degree. Her parents had never even seen her wearing a professional outfit. They did not understand what she did in her job — only that people worked for her — but they were full of pride for their “little girl.” The day of Bibi's doctoral graduation ceremony, her parents finally saw her as grown up, and Bibi could see their pride. She stated how parents “have to go and continue with their lives and continue with their jobs,” especially when kids don't go away to college and as independent adults “you have to do your own thing and figure things out on your own.”

The importance of making one's family proud was noted by Alicia in describing receiving her doctorate at her graduation ceremony, her proudest moment in her education career. She noted:

You go up on the stage and you give ... Even talking about it right now I'm kind of getting chills, but yeah, when they just put the hood over you and they finally say "Dr so-and-so" because at that point they can't take it away from you. It was just nine years of work and sweat and tears and all that were just coming into that point and I just remember they put it over me and my whole family went crazy because they were all in the stand and they were all going crazy and I walked across the stage and my advisor was on the other side waiting for me and he shook my hand and gave me a big hug and that was one of the best moments ever.

Alicia stated the pride was from more than just earning a higher degree, and not just about the prestige of having the title of doctor. It was about the happiness felt from knowing you make your parents proud.

I'm me before I am my degree sort of thing...I really love the joy and the pride that I see in my parents when they introduce me and they're like "oh yes this is my daughter and she's a Ph.D. and I try to do like "mom, please stop" but they have that twinkle in their eye when they say it and so that's always just something that will never get old; making your parents proud.

Aspirational Success

The theme aspirational success emerged among the narratives addressing confidence, high aspirations, motivation, ambitions, and hard work. In addition, participants mentioned the educational values their family instilled in them early in life, and their ultimate goal to make their parents proud and achieve financial success through grit, determination, and a strong belief that any goal is attainable.

High aspirations and grit. David spoke about success in terms of one's perspective, having always experienced some level of achievement because of hard work and perseverance. David noted, "I don't think I've ever failed from an objectives point of view. I've never failed a class. Certainly, subjectively, I've not met my own expectations or have been surprised at where I've landed, at the end of the day." Carmen stated her belief of succeeding regardless of obstacles strongly influenced her academic and professional success. She elaborated:

I think really for me was that I didn't take no for an answer. Again, I always felt like I had what it took to just get it done, no matter what. I would just, if I didn't get it the first time then I would get it the second, maybe the third time, but I guess what influenced my success is just that I, if I wanted something

I'll just do whatever I need to get it. I guess you just have to have that, I want it, I want it, I want it. I guess that's what influenced my success.

Valeria described how important it is to have “the drive and the desire and the motivation” to work hard and keep going until you are successful. She noted:

There's lots of smart people who aren't successful because they never applied it, or who have talent but don't become successful because they didn't practice. Like you might have talent in piano, but if you never practice it then you won't be strong and getting it right. If you're intelligent and you don't do the work and play by the rules and set goals, then you're not going to get anywhere. You need both the talent and intelligence but you also need the drive and the desire and the motivation to go. One of them is you're born with, the other one you have to work on it.

Jaime noted the importance of having grit — the belief that you can do anything you put your mind to and the motivation to achieve your goals. Growing up he observed local attorneys giving back to the community, getting involved in events and working for the towns people. He said he realized if they could do it, so could he. Jaime elaborated:

I would always see the attorneys where I work at and I would see them in the community here in Eagle Pass at events and stuff, and I said, "Hey, you know what, I want to be like those guys. If they can do it." My saying is always, "If they can do it, why can't I do it?" We're all made out of the same bones and flesh. If they can do it, I can do it, too. That was my motivation is like, "Hey, you know what, I'm going to try and I'm going to do it."

Bibi noted the significance in believing in oneself and staying true no matter how educated one gets, regardless of one's role later in life. Bibi noted that “you can always learn something, there's always something that you don't know.” Bibi said that while life is unpredictable, individuals decide their paths, and “you never know what risk you're going to take that ends up paying off in the big time.” Bibi stated:

I feel like I've yet to evolve into something else. I feel like at many times like the same person. I feel like the way I talk to individuals. The way I talk to people, I feel like it's not changed. I'm still the person that regardless of where you work, what you do, I want to get to know you.

Bibi stated that believing in oneself is essential, even when others do not believe in you or try to hold you back from doing greater things. Bibi's experience was that many times individuals want to hold someone back, and this was particularly the case for borderland Latin@s in Eagle Pass. She noted that it's important for those who want to advance to keep pushing forward to achieve their goals. Bibi noted:

I just always feel like anyone, regardless of where you're at, just follow whatever path where it takes you. It could take to a Ph.D, it could to a law degree, it could take you anywhere. Just don't give up on yourself because there's so many people out there that want to bring you down because of their own insecurities or their own issues that they have, but you really don't have to listen to them.

Hard work. David noted that demonstrating a solid work ethic while working to achieve goals and deliver a successful result will let one accomplish anything they desire. He stated “you work hard, you put your nose to the grindstone, and you just hope that your work can speak for itself.” David elaborated that regardless of the task, you need to do your best to show your best. This mindset of doing things right was instilled in him by his parents who told him to “do good work and do it well.”

David stated that his advice to any borderland Latin@ seeking success in school or life was that hard work will get you wherever you want to be and that “life will be different” than you may expect, but ultimately “it will be worth it and never get discouraged.” From his own experience, David described:

I think my clients would tell you that I am a quick learner and often times don't complain about the work to be had or to be done and I think that's probably a testament to growing up on the border and growing up with my parents and their background because regardless of what the task was, whether it be law school, whether it be serving my clients now, or even in undergrad or working a part-time job or just going through the motions of completing assignments, you can complain only so much but at the end of the day you have the choice to either do it or get your nose to the grind stone and not do it.

Financial success. Multiple participants emphasized that the biggest difference between their current situation and their upbringing was the financial success that resulted from their advanced degrees. Jaime noted that his legal education provided financial security so that he no longer worried about food and housing. Jaime shared:

I can go anywhere I want. When we were kids, it was a family of 5. My mom didn't work. It was my dad working at the cemetery for minimum wage, so we had to stretch the money, like government help, whatever. Food stamps. We lived in housing. We didn't have much man. I remember my dad... every paycheck, we had like an allowance, and he would give us like a dollar. That was like awesome back then. It was a dollar man. We didn't complain, but I remember struggling and just eating cornflakes.

Borderland and Cultural Influence

The theme of borderland and cultural influence arose from discussions about participants' departure from Eagle Pass to attend college and how their upbringing influenced their development throughout their higher education journeys. Narratives discussed leaving the border town and family for colleges that exposed them to a diverse community with different demographics and language.

Alicia noted that growing up on the border influences who you are as an individual, but doesn't predestine a person for failure or force a limited future. Alicia elaborated:

At the heart of all this and the heart of everything it doesn't matter geographically where you come from it's more like the core of your being. The core of the hard work and the drive and the need for success sort of thing that I think really makes you who you are and a lot of that does come from the geographic aspect of things. All of our parents have always shown us to do better but it doesn't mean that that's going to stop you. It doesn't mean that being a kid from the border means you can't get out of the border and that you can't do anything else.

Alicia described the mixed feelings she had when she left Eagle Pass for college, and how her professional plans meant she likely would not return. The primary professional occupations in the small border town included education, healthcare, and law. Alicia elaborated:

As I was packing up getting ready to leave Eagle Pass, it was bitter sweet because I knew from the time that I was leaving college that I was never going to live in Eagle Pass again. As crazy as that sounds, but just what I wanted to do with my life, I wasn't going to end in Eagle Pass, I wasn't going to be a teacher, I was going to be a lawyer or a doctor or a nurse and something where I could have a career in Eagle Pass, I wanted to be an engineer, I wanted to be a scientist.

Carmen spoke of the importance of being open to learning about new people, other ways of life, and moving outside your comfort zone. Carmen noted that in Eagle Pass, many people were comfortable with what was familiar, and that residents looked and acted alike — as borderland Latin@s. She stated it was important to be exposed to varied ethnicities and ways of living. Carmen noted “I think being exposed to the way some of the people think and act and how they see life was pretty

positive for me.” Carmen admitted to still not understanding much of American culture, but iterated, as a first generation U.S. citizen, a belief in the American dream of doing what it takes to be happy and finding success regardless of the obstacles put before you. She stated:

My mom came from Mexico. I'm first generation. Maybe it was just us but I think we had a very unique experience and that's what makes us who we are and what we offer to people. I think the number one thing is that we are still, all of the beauty of the American Dream is still there for us, and we can make it happen for ourselves. We just kind of need to have the willpower and just say we are going to do it no matter what.

Mario shared a childhood story about accompanying his mother to work the fields picking pecans and onions. He mentioned how this moment clearly demonstrated the sacrifice his mother made so her kids would have a better life. This life event stayed with him into adulthood and is a strong reason for his desire to give those who have little, like those from his border town. Mario shared:

I remember this one time I was a kid and I'd go with her...it's like basically we'd be picking onions and putting them in these bags and then they weigh them at the end and they pay you for them. I remember it was hot and I was telling my mom, 'Why do you work here? Do you like working here? I don't understand, do you want to work anywhere else?' I think my mom basically looked at me and she's like, 'Well, I work here for you. You'll see.' It's one of those things I felt like ... It was a sense of sacrifice, it was always for my life, but it just means that I need to give back”.

Being from the border for Bibi meant learning life skills that toughened her up, and prepared her to be independent and to figure out a solution regardless of the situation. Bibi stated “I feel like some things that I picked up being from a border town were more different skills that perhaps I wouldn't have learned if I didn't grow up in the area.” Bibi felt that even though in college she was far from home and fully

on her own for the first time, she could successfully navigate her new world. Bibi emphasized that her borderland roots were never a disadvantage, and while her upbringing gave her a different perspective than many of her counterparts, she always felt she could accomplish as much as anyone. Having achieved her doctorate Bibi noted:

I graduated from a border town, that's where I grew up, and many people might look at me and be like, "wow, she had such a disadvantage," or "if she would've gone to another school, she would've had a better advantage," but now, really, I feel like I've equalized everything. I'm in the same playing field as others and I did that myself, so I always feel like regardless of what your circumstances are, regardless of what life hands you, you can always, regardless of what you do, just equalize what opportunities are offered to you because you can work harder. You can do more and at the end of the day still come up with the same as anybody else.

David admitted that when he went to college he was not fully aware of how different growing up on the border was. That was mostly because he initially stayed within his comfortable circle of friends. David noted, however, "I think in retrospect, it's that language wasn't spoken the same, the food at the dormitories was not the same, the same work ethic and nurturing environment that exists and is nurtured on a border town isn't the same in an academic setting." David said that once he became open to meeting new people and exploring other ways of being, he grew as a person and set his path in motion to where he is today. David stated:

I think it was probably junior year when I started to sort of grow some legs of independence, truly, and think of life outside of Eagle Pass...having that social network that was completely removed and apart from Eagle Pass I think helped me sort of just feel like a different person from a growth perspective because I was growing both in an intellectual capacity and in a society ... like social capacity, too, because my social network was expanding and I was forcing myself to engage in new friendships.

When Pablo first left for college he tried to socialize with people he knew from Eagle Pass, sometimes “venturing just outside of the comfort zone of people you knew, people that you could relate to a lot more easily.” Pablo mentioned struggling to go outside his comfort zone to meet new people throughout college and admitted he wished he would have tried harder, but also shared that one of his fondest memories was taking part in a Washington, D.C. internship, which exposed him to a world he knew nothing about, but enjoyed exploring. Pablo’s advice to other borderland Latin@s was:

The thing that I’d want to point out is, don’t be afraid to explore and try different things, and get out of your comfort zone. That’s partly what held me back, I think, trying to maintain keeping that comfort zone. It was only in D.C., I got thrown into a whole mix of different cultures and different people, and driven people. That was really an eye-opening experience. It’s cool to try these different things, and don’t be afraid to make a fool out of yourself if you go and try something.

Bibi spoke of the importance of staying culturally and socially grounded, even after attaining a doctoral degree, noting “I’m the exact same person I was before... I feel like I’m the same person my parents raised.” Bibi stated that because of her upbringing and cultural values, college did not change who she was as an individual. She articulated:

I get completely disappointed when I meet people that have advanced degrees, that are in higher positions and they don't even know what the name of the individual that comes picks up the trash for them. Things like that that they don't know who takes care of the lawn. They don't know who takes care of the phone services. They don't know who takes care of the A/C system and those are things that are big for me. I always felt like that person, whoever they are, could be my mom and dad and I would hate for someone to not

respect them and not say high to them or not say good morning. Everyone deserves that.

David spoke of how when he first went to college he did not pay attention to the “societal differences that existed within [his university]”, as he had not much experience with people with cultural differences or different values. David’s parents were college-educated and they expected him to attend college and become a successful professional. Despite the fact that he grew up in a community where the Latin@ population exceeded 95 percent, David said at college he “never walked in and looked to see how many are or how many are not like me.” As a legal professional these societal and cultural differences were brought forward in his everyday work. David’s success in college and as a legal professional was due in part to his father’s advice to “always keep our head held high” throughout the ups and downs of the world. When advising Latin@s about success, David would share, “keep your head held high always. The best is yet to come.”

Laura spoke of experiencing a cultural shock in college after growing up on the border where people have similar backgrounds and values. Laura mentioned the reality of being a minority and feeling awkward in situations that never occurred in Eagle Pass. Laura iterated:

There was never an issue growing up in Eagle Pass because everyone had the same social history. We had the same background. That's a huge generalization, I understand that. In terms of going to college, it's when you walk into your room and your roommate who is white, and all her friends are there that are all white. You walk into a conversation about affirmative action, and how they're so pissed off about it. You walk in, and the room suddenly gets really quiet. It's hard.

Sense of Belonging

The theme of sense of belonging was established through the repeated mention of various college barriers and the belief by multiple participants that they were not good enough to succeed in college. There were shared narratives of trying to catch up, second guessing decisions, feeling like a failure, and lacking proper guidance.

Catching up. Carmen described her undergraduate academic experience as “one of those water hoses that firefighters use to take out the fire.” Carmen mentioned that even though she took advanced courses at her Eagle Pass high school, she felt like her experience did not fully prepare her for the academic rigors of college. Carmen noted:

I was just like, it just seems like it was fast, just kind of a blur. It went fine but I felt like I was constantly staying alive, studying. I was just constantly in my books. I kind of lost a little bit of the social life but that's okay.

Alicia spoke of her lack of preparedness in what was supposed to be “basic stuff.” Alicia learned quickly the need to speak with professors, get extra help, and work hard to catch up to the level other students seemed to be. She noted “I spent a lot of time going to Half-priced Books and picking up manuals...like trying to kind of backtrack and try to re-learn some of the basic stuff.”

Belonging. Mario described a sense of not belonging when he first arrived at college. He felt as if he was always trying to catch up and perhaps was not good enough to be there, even though he had previously done well in school. It was readily

apparent that he was a minority among many white students, and that provoked fears of being less capable than others. He stated:

There was always a sense of like I didn't belong, I was this guy that went to this school that's not very well known, not a very good strong academic school. There's obviously, in these schools, there's no way around it, there's affirmative action and so you always wonder whether you're there because of your race and ethnicity as opposed to your accomplishments. It always is sense of like maybe I don't belong a lot, at the beginning.

In describing her initial observations upon arriving at college, Laura spoke of the sudden realization that “there were a lot of white people,” and of “what it means to be a minority, what that label entails, and having people question why you're there.” She noted how all the feelings of not being good enough, regardless of her past academic achievements, rushed to her brain. She said it was difficult to move away from those thoughts, stating:

You might have been top three or top four, five, whatever at your school, but your school wasn't that good to begin with. That whole idea. There's some truth to that. I got away with studying a certain way in high school and succeeding among my peers, but then when I got to college it was, oh well that really isn't going to cut it.

Even with early academic success, Mario noted that it took time for him to feel he was smart enough to be in college and could do as well as “all the white kids.” Mario felt that the college students around him were “pretty smart and a lot of them way smarter than I'll ever be.” He noted that other students were much more prepared to succeed, and emphasized “it took me awhile to think that I belonged and that I deserved to be here just because I needed affirmation ... I think that was a big challenge, getting over the fact that I belong.”

David stated that he never felt like he did not belong during his first year of college, but realized in retrospect that was because he did not venture much beyond his comfort zone. He was surrounded by Eagle Pass friends, people he had always known, and did things he felt comfortable doing. David felt he held himself back that first year because he viewed college as a continuation of his early academic success. Once he expanded his inner circle, he felt he grew as a person. David noted “I think I held myself back, if anything, or didn't allow myself to become the better version of myself that I knew was out there.”

Bibi shared a story from college when for the first time in her life someone referred to her as “a stupid Mexican.” She explained:

[In college] people would ask, where's your accent from? I'm like I didn't even know I had an accent. I don't know, this is how I talk. ... I remember one time, and it's always stuck in my head, this girl, we were just there ... I knew her just like a queen, I didn't know her that well. She felt that I was in her way and decided to call me a stupid Mexican. I've never been called something like that, I was just in shock. I couldn't believe that someone I knew would say something like that to me. It was so interesting. It really had me see, like wow if this person that knows me thinks this of me, what does everybody else think of me? What do other people who don't tell me things, think of me?

Integrating Emerging Themes into Community Cultural Wealth Model

The theoretical framework for this study was Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model, where the intent was to understand the sociocultural influences on Latin@ academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s. Yosso's model states that the intersection of six forms of capital, including aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant, form community

cultural wealth that translates to an individual’s complete cultural capital. This study suggested that the intersection of multiple forms of social and cultural capital influenced borderland Latin@ academic identity development.

The four emergent themes as a whole did mostly fit into one or more of Yosso’s sociocultural capitals to a certain extent. However, the differences and interpretation of themes is explained in the following section. Table 8 defines Yosso’s (2005) six forms of capital. Table 9 defines the four emergent themes from this study. Figures 2-6 shows the relationships found between the four emergent themes from this study and Yosso’s model.

Table 8

Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Capital Definitions

Community Cultural Wealth Capital	Definition
Aspirational	The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of real and perceived barriers.
Navigational	The ability to navigate through barriers and inequalities towards academic success.
Social	A network of people and community resources.
Linguistic	The intellectual and social skills achieved through communication experiences in a bicultural and bilingual environment.
Familial	Incorporating a commitment to community well-being, social capital as a network of people and community resources.
Resistant	The oppositional behavior challenging inequality.

Table 9

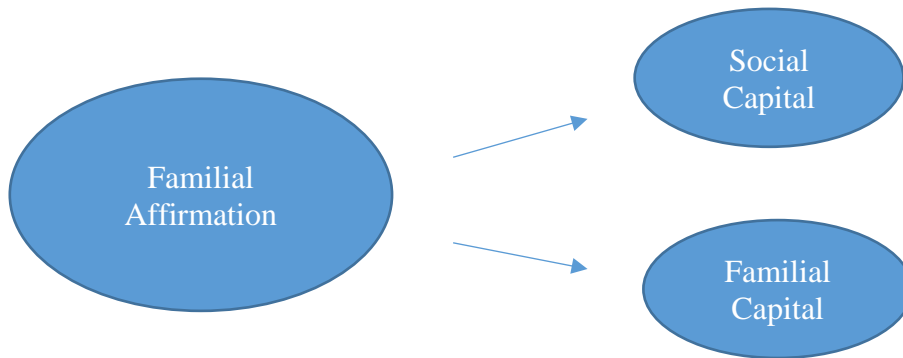
Highly Educated Borderland Latino's Themes Definitions

Highly Educated Borderland Latino's Themes	Definition
Familial Affirmation	The desire to make parents, mentors, and friends proud of achievements and the need to involve them throughout major life decisions.
Aspirational Success	The ability to maintain high aspirations through hard work and perseverance to achieve success regardless of any obstacles.
Borderland and Cultural Influence	The cultural influence of the bicultural, bilingual borderland environment on personal development.
Sense of Belonging	The idea of constantly playing catch up and feelings of belonging in an unfamiliar world.

Familial Affirmation Interpretation

The theme familial affirmation relates to Yosso's notion of social and familial capital, wherein the networks of people an individual associates with throughout his or her life strongly impacts their development by influencing their life choices along the way. A difference revealed in this study of highly educated borderland Latin@s was the desire to make family (parents, friends, mentors) proud by achieving happiness through academic and professional success. This group of highly educated borderland Latin@s aspired for success for themselves as well as the affirmation of the networks that supported and pushed them throughout their lives.

Figure 2



Familial Affirmation v. Community Cultural Wealth Capital

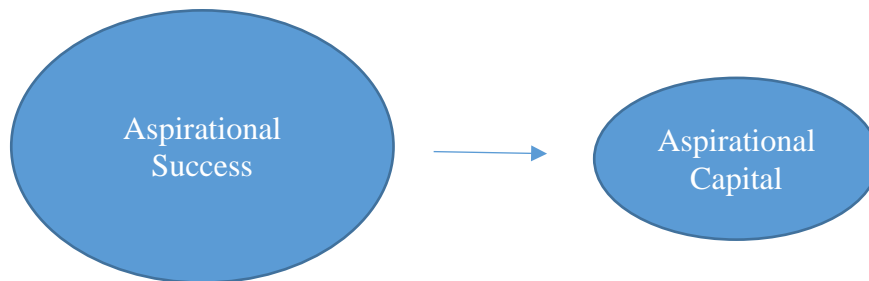
Participants' responses reflected a shared need for affirmation from their family as well as themselves. Most participants experienced academic success early, but along each step of higher education sought affirmation that what they were accomplishing meant something, and that they should continue moving forward. Their social circles fulfilled this need for support and provided encouragement that they would reach their goals. The major finding from this emergent theme was a person's need for a family — blood relation or not — that pushed them to constantly be better, that supported them regardless of circumstances, and that ultimately affirmed they were moving in the right direction. This theme relates to the academic research on fictive kinship, the social capital concept where the network of family and friends transcends social relationships (Tierney & Venegas, 2006). I chose familial affirmation as opposed to Yosso's (2005) familial capital or the concept of fictive kinship because of the findings associated with not only the literal importance

of people called family, but the desire to incorporate family in major life decisions and affirm a successful life.

Aspirational Success Interpretation

The theme aspirational success is firmly associated with Yosso's aspirational capital. Participants were all highly educated borderland Latin@s who had hopes and dreams established early, many by their parents. Each showed high aspirations for success in academic and in life, where any goal could be accomplished through hard work and grit. Each shared a strong belief that anything was possible.

Figure 3



Aspirational Success vs Community Cultural Wealth Capital

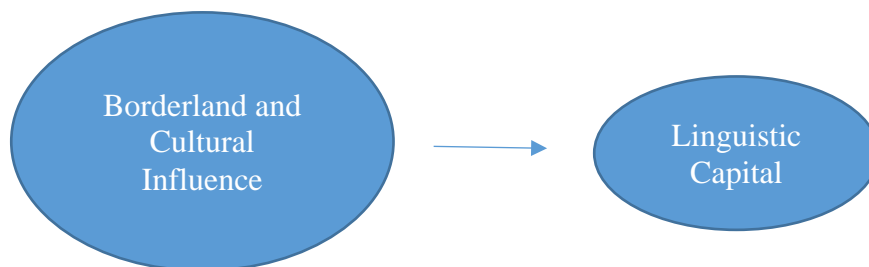
Yosso (2005) defined aspirational capital as “the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of real and perceived barriers.” The participants in this study confirmed this form of capital, but these findings pointed to a difference in interpretation, as this group of highly educated borderland Latin@s found academic success early on and built from this success. Study participants learned about success through family guidance and their own efforts to make their parents proud by working hard to accomplish anything put before them. Early

success helped participants developed confidence that motivated them for higher aspirations for personal and financial success. The “ability to maintain hopes and dreams” was through grit and perseverance, because participants tasted success, learned success, and found success throughout their lives and in their academic and professional journeys.

Borderland and Cultural Influence Interpretation

The theme of borderland and cultural influence ties closely to Yosso’s linguistic capital by demonstrating the influence a bicultural and bilingual borderland environment has on the academic and social development of highly educated borderland Latin@s. The participants in this study mentioned a desire to accomplish any goal before them regardless of any obstacles along the way. However, all participants encountered a life outside of Eagle Pass that was markedly different than the world they grew up in and, consequently, they had to adjust to cultural differences. The successful navigation of this newfound world contributed to the ultimate academic success of each participant.

Figure 4



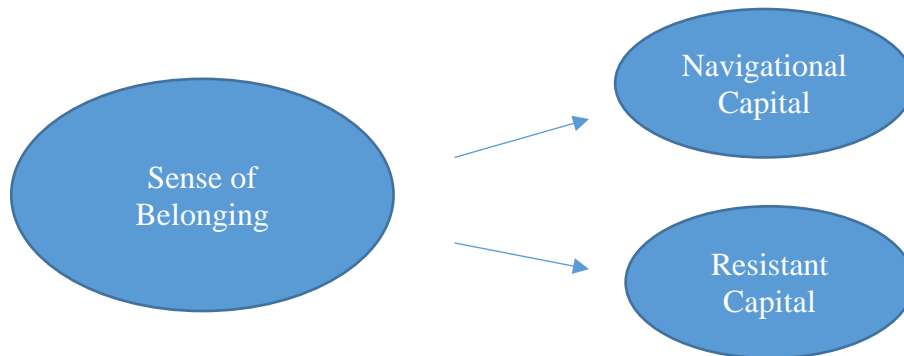
Borderland and Cultural Influence vs Community Cultural Wealth Capital

For this group of participants, the first year away from home, family, friends, and the culture they grew up with was a major adjustment, as they were exposed to various other cultural norms. For most, this cultural explosion caused them to question their cultural upbringing and for the first time made them think about what made them different as individuals and as borderland Latin@s. This study found that borderland Latin@s succeeded academically because they became more aware of their own culture and others, they gained an appreciation for cultural differences, and they expanded their cultural mindset to new ways of being. New social and cultural experiences in their college years became new life lessons. Their successful academic journey became possible because of their ability to adapt to their new environment and also to strive and contribute in their unique way as borderland Latin@s. The successful navigation through this important life stage was at the core of why this group succeeded in higher education.

Sense of Belonging Interpretation

The theme of sense of belonging relates to Yosso's navigational and resistant capital. Many of the participants in this study experienced a persistent feeling that they needed to catch up and questioned whether they belonged. As mentioned, participants who left their borderland communities for college had to successfully navigate cultural differences while trying to stay true to their bicultural identity. They felt they were not as well-prepared as others academically. The fact that they spoke and sounded different than others made them question whether they belonged.

Figure 5



Sense of Belonging vs. Community Cultural Wealth Capital

The theme sense of belonging could have been incorporated into the theme of borderland and cultural influence because it was the participants' new environment and cultural shock that led to question belongingness. As noted, this group of highly educated borderland Latin@s experienced academic success early and built upon that success as they grew older. Upon leaving their familiar borderland environment to begin their higher education journey, however, they found their new world was unlike the life they knew. Concerns about whether they were good enough or belonged, as well as feeling alone and that they always needed to catch up were barriers to success in their first years of college. This created a stressful time of uncertainty about how they fit in their new world.

The participants in the study persisted and found ways to succeed in their new environment. Their ability to navigate within a new environment and develop a sense of belonging primarily was attributed to the fact that they knew what success looked and felt like. Through perseverance they were able to move beyond this

period of uncertainty. While they experienced this inner questioning throughout the higher education journeys, they were able to overcome them to achieve academic success.

Findings Summary

The intersection of familial affirmation, aspirational success, borderland and cultural influence, and sense of belonging strongly influenced the academic identity development of my study participants. The shared narratives described the importance of family in life circumstances and decisions, the desire for bigger and greater things, the need to belong, and the lifelong influence the borderland culture had on their academic identity. The constant intersection of the four emergent themes throughout the participants educational journeys were the primary sociocultural influences on their success.

Chapter 5 – Summary and Conclusions

The aim of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the sociocultural influences that impacted the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s in Eagle Pass, Texas. By delving into their childhood borderland environment and examining the differing life experiences, I hoped to better understand the sociocultural influences that develop the core attributes leading to their academic success. The study was framed with Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model using a Latin@ critical theory lens.

The study sought to understand the academic identity development of borderland Latin@s by interviewing participants at a point in life that allowed cumulative reflection on their lived experiences. Moreover, there was a secondary intent to understand why Latinas outperform their Latino counterparts (THECB, 2016) despite similar sociocultural influences. Focusing on the community of Eagle Pass was important because of the high concentration of Latin@s living in U.S.-Mexico border towns (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2015).

Community Cultural Wealth Framework

Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model, a Latin@ critical theory stance, framed this study by examining the lived experiences of highly educated borderland Latin@s and the impact sociocultural influences had on their academic paths. Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model is an adaption of Oliver and Shapiro's (1995) model that noted "communities of color nurture cultural wealth through at least six forms of capital such as aspirational, navigational, social,

linguistic, familial, and resistant capital” (p. 77). Notably for this study, Perez and Taylor (2015) recognized that few researchers have applied Yosso’s (2005) model to Latin@ student success, instead typically focusing on Latin@ student access (Astin & Oseguera, 2004; McDonough, 1997; Nora, 2004; Pérez & McDonough, 2008; Pérez, 2014; Perez, & Taylor, 2015).

Phenomenological Methodology

Extreme case and criterion sampling methods were used for this study (Hays & Singh, 2011). For this qualitative design, I interviewed 10 highly educated borderland Latin@s, who fell under the extreme case category of having the most positive academic experience compared with their counterparts. The participant sample is based on the criteria of being Latin@s who grew up in the border town of Eagle Pass, Texas, who were 8th graders between 1996 and 1998, and who completed a doctorate, juris doctorate, or medical doctorate degree.

Because I sought to understand differences between men and women, I interviewed an equal balance of five Latinos and five Latinas. I chose Eagle Pass, Texas along the southwest Texas-Mexico border because of its high concentration of Latin@s and sobering demographic statistics, yet has produced a relatively high number of highly educated individuals throughout the years. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), 96 percent of Eagle Pass residents are Latin@, 36 percent did not graduate high school, 28 percent live below poverty, and have a median household income of \$33,000.

Research Questions

The study was guided by two research questions:

- 1) What sociocultural and lived experiences influenced the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s?
- 2) What gender differences exist between the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s?

The first research question aimed to identify the factors that influence the core academic identity development of Latin@s, and at what points in life and why do the core of Latin@ identity occur. The second research question intended to examine differences among Latinos and Latinas to understand why Latinas have been more academically successful than their male counterparts when they face similar life circumstances.

Major Findings

The major findings of the study were that the environment and sociocultural influences impacted the academic journey of highly educated borderland Latin@s, and ultimately led to positive academic outcomes in academia and professionally. These findings are broadly in line with Yosso's community cultural wealth model, which framed the study. However, the interpretation of the emergent themes from these findings suggest a modified viewpoint on understanding the academic success development of borderland Latin@s.

This first research question aimed to understand the factors that positively influenced the core academic identity development of borderland Latin@s, how their

lived experiences led to their academic success, and when and why the core of Latin@ academic identity occurred. The findings are consistent with previous research that the educational environments of Latin@s are influenced by cultural identity, parents' educational background and knowledge of academia, and by the participants' sociocultural experiences (Anzaldúa, 1987; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Fuller & Garcia, 2010; Hatt, 2012; Hernandez & Lopez, 2004). In particular, the findings were generally in line with Yosso's six forms of capital. However, this phenomenological study required that I interpret the participant narratives with a fresh perspective and to see how the participants' lived experiences influenced their academic identity development. The four emergent themes of familial affirmation, aspirational success, borderland and cultural influence, and sense of belonging describe these influences on highly educated borderland Latin@s academic journeys, while showing the interaction and connectedness of one another.

Family, Success, and Belonging

The study reinforced previous research validating that parents and friends strongly influenced the core academic identity development of the participants (Carrillo, 2013a; Valencia, 2011). Strong parental values molded the participants to be a good person and influenced the aspiration to do economically better than their parents was mentioned in some form or other (Fuller & García, 2010; Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006; Livas-Dott et. al, 2010; Martinez et al, 2012). Current parental education and socioeconomic status affects Latin@ academic success, and this study added to the literature by affirming the aforementioned, and also noting participants'

aspirations for greater economic success than childhood experiences (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2014).

The results suggested that this group of highly educated borderland Latin@s were ultimately academically successful in attaining their terminal degrees because they translated family and friends into their newfound world. This group of participants continued their familial relationships through their higher education journey by continuously keeping in touch with parents by set phone calls and/or frequent visits. The concept of family meant more than being a blood relation, but included friends and mentors who believed in them and inspired them to do greater things and reach for higher successes while accomplishing smaller goals along the way. The importance of a support system was reinforced in this study (Ceja, 2004; Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy (2006); Martinez et al., 2004; Ong, Phinney, & Dennis, 2006; Schneider & Ward, 2003).

Yosso (2005) wrote of familial capital as “incorporating a commitment to community well-being” and aspirational capital as “the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of real and perceived barriers” (p. 77). This study found that the participants shared a belief of wanting to succeed for both themselves and others regardless of the challenge ahead of them. I contend that the concepts of familial affirmation and aspirational success were translated successfully by the participants as they expanded the inner circle of people they trusted, people who believed in them and their aspirations, while at the same time never losing sight of their *familia*, *familismo*, and desire for a greater tomorrow. The participants found

themselves in unknown territory in college, away from the Eagle Pass culture they had always known, yet had been accomplishing success for so long that inevitably academic success would continue to occur in their higher education journey.

As Chahin (personal communication, March 22, 2017) noted Eagle Pass residents do not realize they are any different from anyone else because they grow up in a dominant and homogenous culture. Only when they leave Eagle Pass does inner questioning begin, but having learned success early in life means future success is inescapable regardless of the perceived obstacle. In essence, this group of borderland participants may have questioned their sense of belonging while away in college, but unearthed the successes they had experienced and translated these positive successes towards future academic achievement. This study implies that for borderland Latin@s a sense of belonging exists long before leaving for college and should be further promoted in a post-secondary setting.

This study found that social relationships were developed and redeveloped because participants learned that they needed to reevaluate friendships to ensure that their inner circle was a holistic support system, reinforcing Yosso's (2005) social capital definition of a network of people and community resources. This group of highly educated borderland Latin@s did not give up their own borderland cultural background, instead used it to construct their own sociocultural capital and contribute to their newly-defined world. Anzaldúa (1987) challenged Latin@s to "embrace the mestiza consciousness" while navigating and straddling multiple worlds of varying cultures, learning to excel regardless of the circumstance. The

participants never had a cultural deficit, rather they found ways to continuously amplify their community cultural wealth to promote continuous academic success.

Academic success for these borderland Latin@s was possible because they found success early on, dreamed of future successes, set goals, and worked hard to achieve those goals despite obstacles. Throughout their higher education journey, participants attained the highest terminal degree because they had strong support systems (navigational and social capital), increased their aspirational hopes and dreams (aspirational capital), navigated unfamiliar environments, and pushed past their own doubts to find success at the end (resistant capital).

This study on highly educated borderland Latin@s suggests their lived experiences positively influenced their academic identity development. The intersection of familial affirmation, aspirational success, borderland and cultural influence, and sense of belonging strongly influenced the academic identity development of the participants. The successful navigation of leaving and finding family, aspiring for continual success, working hard, staying true to their cultural values, and overcoming questions of belonging in new worlds, led to the highest respective academic attainment for each of the participants.

Theoretical Contribution

I feel it is vital for higher education institutions to promote a familial sense of belonging for Latin@s by building real relationships with minority students and showing that institutions care about student success. Going to college, and leaving home to be on their own, is a pivotal point in any student's life and the core moment

of academic identity development. Students who successfully navigate this vital moment, full of questions and confusion, achieve academic success. Therefore, researchers, educators, institutional administrators, and policymakers must better understand ways to help all students, in particular borderland Latin@s, overcome this barrier to success.

Moreover, given the time and energy commitment students commit to succeeding in college, institutions should become their home away from home. This means that faculty, staff, and administrators become extended family. As noted, a significant role of the Latin@ family is to encourage each other to succeed regardless of any obstacles. This study confirmed the importance of family, broadly defined, to student success to include friends, mentors, and anyone serving as a support system. It also corroborated prior research by finding that the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s was strongly influenced by family structure, ideals, and values, as reinforced by the findings related to strong support, high aspirations, confidence, hard work, and cultural upbringing. However, this study extends previous research on family, success aspirations, and sense of belonging by focusing on the positive impacts these sociocultural influences had while growing up on the borderland and in straddling a new world in higher education.

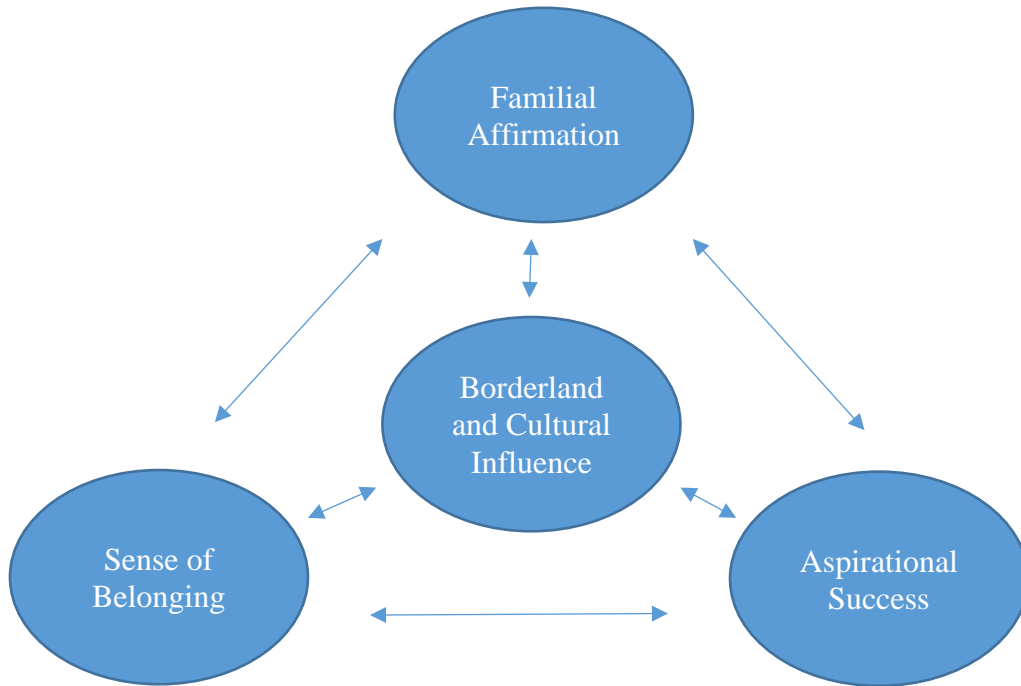
From the narratives, I feel the most prevalent form of capital imperative for student success would be aspirational success, even though the central capital interacting with all other capitals being the borderland and cultural influence. I

defined aspirational success as the ability to maintain high aspirations through hard work and perseverance to achieve success regardless of any obstacles. The group of participants all aspired for success, worked hard to accomplish their goals, and continually sought more for themselves, their family, and their future. This concept of aspirational success can be compared to the idea perpetuated by Escalante saying all that is needed to succeed academically is *ganas* (Musca & Menendez, 1998). Escalante, a high school math teacher, believed in his kids and pushed them to be greater than they themselves thought they could be by telling them all they need is *ganas*, the desire to truly want something and achieve it no matter the circumstance. Escalante's students went on to produce the highest number of Latin@s passing the national AP Calculus exam (Musca & Menendez, 1998). The participants in this study all had this *ganas* ingrained in them by their respective inner circles and developed from an early age. For borderland Latin@s, or any person, that lacks this trait, it is important for their support network to help instill this belief for academic success to continually occur, also showing the importance of the interaction of these forms of capital.

Figure 6 is a representation of the hypothesized theoretical contribution to better understanding the sociocultural lived experiences of highly educated borderland Latin@s, where the borderland and cultural influences are the central environment for the continuous interaction of familial affirmation, aspirational

success, and sense of belonging. Each of these four sociocultural themes is important for the overall academic development of borderland Latin@s.

Figure 6



Sociocultural Borderland Latin@ Model

Other forms of Yosso’s community cultural capital, including resistance and navigational, affect a borderland Latin@s development. However, the participants in this study grew up in dominant, homogenous environment (Eagle Pass) and thus the navigational aspect towards success were invisible to their world. There were no systemic barriers of inequality that needed to be navigated or resisted growing up in a dominant cultural border town. At least this wasn’t needed until each participant left Eagle Pass for higher education in cities where Yosso’s six forms of capital became necessary for continued success. Nevertheless, at this point in each of the

participants lives, each had learned how to be successful, and each fully understood the capital they possessed. In particular, the four emerging themes in this study had been developed and understood to a point where any perceived obstacle or barrier was overcome by each participant on their way towards their terminal degrees.

Deconstructing Gendered Experiences

The second research question in this study focused on gender differences among Latinos and Latinas to understand how each group progressed in their academic pursuits given similar lived experiences. The analysis suggested no apparent differences in how males and females handled sociocultural life experiences and their influence on academic identity development of these men and women.

I believe my interview questions failed to delve into any relevant findings to explain gender differences. I followed a semi-structured interview protocol for a more conversational approach and the interview questions guided the discussion on academic and sociocultural lived experiences. Given my secondary focus on varying experiences across gender lines, some of my questions could have focused more on gender identity.

Ironically and fitting, the lack of relevant findings on differences between Latinos and Latinas stayed true to my use of Latin@s, where the purpose was to “acknowledge equally the experience of women and men in the construction of this diverse and heterogeneous community” (Asencio & Acosta, 2010; Carillo, 2013a, p. 70). The primary sociocultural construct was intended to explore the lived experiences of highly educated borderland Latin@s, while gender was held constant

in analyzing the findings. Gender as a secondary construct proved outside the scope of this particular study, but would be worthwhile for future exploration.

Reflections on Limitations and Delimitations

Being a former Eagle Pass resident influenced my decision to choose a phenomenological study and this location, as I have questioned my own experiences in academia and the influences my sociocultural borderland environment had on my academic and career pathway. I feel this was an inherent limitation, as I ran the risk of incorporating my own positionality. I felt this also was a strength, as I was able to connect with participants on a more personal level, promoting rich discussions. By following phenomenological data collection and analysis techniques I countered my own positionality limitation. Nonetheless, it would be worthwhile to incorporate additional researchers from varied backgrounds, both men and women, to counter this limitation and potentially gain richer insight from shared participant narratives.

I should stress that my study primarily focused on highly educated borderland Latin@s from one border town (Eagle Pass) and that individuals within the study sample all were between the ages 30 and 35, both delimitations. My findings should not be taken as absolute evidence about all Latin@s, as results could vary depending on sample size, location, and ethnic-type. Further research is needed to try to establish any type of causation. It would be worthwhile to study Latin@s across education-level spectrum, across varying age groups, growing up in rural or urban environments, and their family nationality and immigration status.

The findings of this study are limited to borderland Latin@s because of my Latin@ critical theory stance, where I felt it important to explore through Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model. In addition, I took the perspective of Anzaldúa's (1987) Chicana feminist lens, which influenced Yosso's (2005) model and my own thoughts in the data analysis. Anzaldúa (1987) noted themes among Latinas of *nepantla*, *El Mundo Zurdo*, and *Coylxauhqui*, corresponding to issues of living in multiple worlds, struggling to move past the expected outcomes, and telling narratives of social justice and change. As a borderland Latino male I felt I could relate to Anzaldúa's (1987) Chicana feminist stance for Latinas. My own sociocultural experiences growing up along the Texas-Mexico border and the borderland experiences leaving in pursuit of higher education influenced my academic and professional life.

Implications for Research and Practice

In Texas it is important for researchers, educators, administrators, and policymakers to understand what makes borderland Latin@s academically successful given the high concentration of Latin@s living along the Texas-Mexico border and the growing Latin@ population statewide (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2015). Research on sociocultural borderland influences offers a more nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of Latin@s and will greater influence student access in conjunction with student success. For borderland Latin@s, the conversation of student access and student success must be concurrent as improvement is needed in both areas.

From a national perspective, at a time where the borderland environment so often gets negatively portrayed, it is important to showcase positive narratives of success. It is vital to understand the positive sociocultural influences on academic identity development. It is essential that society appreciates and understands the borderland culture, because the growing national Latin@ population will be the drivers of economic prosperity and educational attainment will determine what levels of success the nation has economically and socially.

Policy and Practice

This research suggests that Texas educational policies should be written with a better understanding of the sociocultural experiences of Latin@s, particularly borderland Latin@s. It would be worthwhile for policymakers, administrators, and practitioners to hear borderland Latin@s' experiences in order to develop policies that address unforeseen unidentified barriers. Specifically for the Eagle Pass community, research that helps understand what sociocultural influences affect student success would improve the educational statistics and economic situation. As mentioned previously, Eagle Pass is a dominant and homogenous community, has produced many highly educated borderland Latin@s, yet as a whole still struggles with low educational attainment and poverty. Understanding more about the nuances affecting student success could potentially unearth a large amount of borderland students primed for success, only needing some understanding to help get them past whatever obstacles lays ahead.

In addition, student success policies for Texas Latin@s must be developed in conjunction with student access policies. While the state has made strides in improving higher education access for Latin@s, an equity gap in college-going rates remains (60x30TX, 2015). To understand what contributes to Latin@ academic identity development and student success, policy and practice must still improve higher education access and persistence. Policymakers and practitioners need to establish more holistic support systems that account for sociocultural influences in order to develop stronger relationships during students' educational journeys. The expansion of guided pathways in community colleges and universities is a positive step in this direction.

Further Research

Areas for further research include expanding the sample size and location to include borderland Latin@s from across the Texas-Mexico border, studying borderland Latin@s in other states, and as mentioned, conducting research that deconstructs the role of gender identity and its influence on academic development. This study could be replicated in other much larger Texas border towns like El Paso and Laredo, which would hopefully reinforce findings and conclusions. In addition, it would be worthwhile to research participants from the border city of San Diego, California, to examine those lived experiences. Moreover, it would be interesting to further explore the similarities and differences between other ethnic enclaves that have produced similar highly educated individuals, while coming from dominant and homogenous cultural environments in their own right.

The theoretical framework for this study could also vary by using empowerment theory, resilience theory, or self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1982; Freire, 1970; Solomon, 1976; Masten, Best, and Garmezy, 1990). In addition, I could have framed my study on Anzaldúa's (1987) Chicana feminist theory of *nepantla*, *El Mundo Zurdo*, and *Coylxauhqui* or Carillo's (2013b) Mestiz@ theory of intelligence. I chose to frame this study using Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model because it took into account the complexity associated with understanding Latin@s identity development, yet theories solely focusing on specific aspects would contribute to deeper understanding overall.

Further research on Latin@s in urban and rural areas outside borderland regions would yield additional insight into the lived experiences of the fast-growing Latin@ population. As the United States becomes more diverse and moves toward a majority-minority country, cultural understanding, awareness, and appreciation in education and student success will be important research and practice topics.

Concluding Thoughts

The United States today is more diverse than ever imagined. The country's future depends on an ability to better educate younger generations, especially Latin@ youth, the fastest growing racial/ethnic demographic (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2015). Asset-based research examining highly educated borderland Latin@s that focuses on positive aspects of sociocultural influences can inform educators of social and cultural differences. Hopefully this new knowledge can contribute to closing the achievement gaps. Research is also needed to understand the positive influences

social and cultural influences have on Latin@s academic success development, instead of research focusing on the deficit narratives faced by Latin@s.

This study suggests that understanding the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s requires researchers, educators, administrators, and policymakers to take a nuanced look at the intersection of various sociocultural influences. Educators must better understand sociocultural differences to acknowledge varying lived experiences and examine student success from an asset-based perspective, instead of the deficit-narrative perpetuated too often. Educators must trust the students they have and not the students they wish they had. Covey (2006) noted that trust is “the one thing that changes everything” and without trust we cannot reach maximum efficiency in student success (p. ii).

In studying highly educated borderland Latin@s, I conclude that we must move away from the deficit-narrative and focus on the positive attributes Latin@s and all groups bring to the table through their diverse cultural upbringings. Asturias (1946) once wrote, “Intrinsic excellence is always to be found where there is lack of outer display” (p. 100). As unique individuals we all have an excellence within us. Educators, at all levels, must believe in the vast potential of Latin@s, must support and encourage growth regardless of sociocultural upbringing, and must trust that student success is always possible if they take some time to learn more about the positive attributes of each and every person.

Appendix A - Questionnaire

Questionnaire

1. What is your full name?
2. What is your gender?
3. What undergraduate institution(s) did you graduate from?
 - a. What was your major?
 - b. How long did it take you to finish from start to finish (years)?
4. What undergraduate institution(s) did you graduate from?
 - a. What was your major?
 - b. How long did it take you to finish from start to finish (years)?
5. Where have you lived since you started college? How long at each place?
6. What is your current occupation? What other jobs have you had in your lifetime?
7. This study is about borderland Latin@s and the sociocultural influences on academic success. What artifacts could you share (pictures, books, movies, awards, newspaper clippings) that speak to the above statement? Please try to share at least one artifact at the scheduled first interview.

Appendix B – Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Interview 1

1. What is your earliest memory of academic success?
2. What were your biggest barriers towards success in college?
3. Describe a time you failed in the academic setting.
4. Did you have academic mentors? If so, who were they and what did they do?
5. What were your parents' educational values and goals for you?
6. Describe when you earnestly thought about attending college and why.
7. Describe your choice to attend college and what you remember feeling as you left.
8. Describe your first full year of college. How did it go?
9. What was different about being at college and growing up in the border?
10. Who was your social network in college? Mentors? Friends? Tutors? How did they impact your success?
11. When did you decide you wanted to go to graduate school? What motivated you to attain this higher credential?
12. What do you feel is the reason you excelled academically? What or who influenced your success?
13. Did you bring any artifacts to share? Can you please tell me more about what you picked and why?

Interview 2

14. What were your biggest barriers towards success in college (undergraduate)?
15. What were your biggest barriers towards success in college (graduate)?
16. Describe your relationship with your family when you were in college?
17. What is your proudest moment in college? Why?
18. What or who was your biggest motivation to succeed academically?
19. How is your life different today than as a child because of your advanced degree?
20. What piece of advice would you have for borderland Latino aiming for your degree?
21. Is there anything you would like to say that's on your mind because of our discussions?

Appendix C – Familial Affirmation Codes

Participant Narrative Codes	Counts
Friends	52
Parents	39
Family	36
Mentors	28
Advice	17
Mom	14
Being Expected	11
Choosing College	9
Dad	8
Lacking Mentors	8
Support System	8
Seek Help	6
Social Relationships	6
Comfortable	5
Studying	5
Balance	4
Different Paths	1
Memories	1
Mentor to Others	1
Teachers	1

Appendix D – Aspirational Success Codes

Participant Narrative Codes	Counts
Confidence	30
High Aspirations	26
Motivation	26
Higher Ambitions	18
Hard Work	17
Education Values	15
Proud	15
Financial Success	12
Grit	10
Early Success	9
Determination	6
Academic Success	5
Beliefs	5
Excitement	5
High Expectations	4
Job Aspirations	4
Competition	3
Finances	3
Giving Back	3
Love of Learning	3
Perseverance	3
Challenged	2
Drive	2
Extra-Curricular	2
Goals	2
Personality	2
Proving Yourself	2
Reading	2
Resilience	2
Working	2
Adapting	1
Affirmation	1
Doing Good	1
Dreams	1
Going to College	1
Open Minded	1
Pride	1
Purpose	1

Appendix E – Borderland and Cultural Influence Codes

Participant Narrative Codes	Counts
Border	37
Cultural Differences	36
Cultural Appreciation	15
Leaving Eagle Pass	14
Leaving Family	14
Cultural Awareness	12
First Year	10
Gender Differences	5
Demographics	4
Language	4
Diversity	3
Branching Out	2
Expanding Horizons	2
First Generation	2
New Experiences	2
Equity	1
Paying College	1
Racial Differences	1
Racism	1

Appendix F – Sense of Belonging Codes

Participant Narrative Codes	Counts
College Barriers	31
Not Good Enough	20
Catching Up	7
Belonging	6
Second Guessing	6
Feeling Alone	4
Academics	3
Feeling Like Failure	3
Lacking Guidance	3
Not Knowing	2
Self Esteem	2
Failing	1
Fitting In	1
Pleasing Others	1
Stress	1
Struggling	1
Testing	1

Appendix G – Consent for Participation Form

UT-Austin Study Number: 00002030

Approval Date: 5/10/2016

Expires: 5/9/2019

Consent for Participation in Research

Title: Examining the Sociocultural Influences on the Academic Identity Development of Highly Educated Borderland Latin@s

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the Study

You have been asked to participate in a research study about examining the influence of the sociocultural environment on the academic identity development of highly educated borderland Latin@s. The overall purpose of the study is to understand how Latin@ academic identities are developed, focus on the positive impact the sociocultural environment has on borderland Latin@s, and to explore how gender differences shape academically successful Latin@s.

What will you be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete a short questionnaire through email.
- Participate in an in-person interview for 1-1.5 hours at an agreed upon time/location.
- Participate in a skype interview for about 1 hour one week after the first interview.

The data collection for this study will take place in the Summer 2016 and will include approximately 10-12 study participants. The study is planned to be concluded by December 2016 after the dissertation defense.

Your participation will be audio recorded and transcribed.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, researchers, educators, and policymakers would benefit by learning more about borderland Latin@s identity development path through the educational pipeline may increase academic student success for future borderland Latin@ students.

Do you have to participate?

No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time.

Will there be any compensation?

You will not receive any type of payment participating in this study.

How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you participate in this research study?

Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured through use of pseudonyms. The names of participants will be removed from notes, transcripts, and all data sources, and assigned a pseudonym to protect participant confidentiality. Data will be collected through a questionnaire and through interviews. A master/key file will be created for linking pseudonyms and will be password encrypted and securely stored online until the completion of the dissertation at the end of Fall 2016, where all files will be destroyed. Audio files, transcriptions, and any file document, will be individually encrypted and password-protected, as well as stored online in a secure password-protected environment. All audio files, transcripts, and questionnaire files will be named according to the pseudonym (e.g. Alpha – audio file, Alpha – transcript, Alpha – questionnaire). All documentation and analysis will exclude any personally identifiable information of study participants. If incidental identifying information is captured through any audio recordings this information will be removed for all transcript correspondence as soon as the researcher is made aware of potential privacy liability. Artifacts provided by participants in the first interview will not be kept by the researcher, but will only serve to expand the interview conversation between the participant and the researcher. The intent of the personal artifact is to hopefully expand on a topic that may not have been covered in the interview which details the phenomenon of academic identity development. All audio files, transcripts, researcher field notes, and questionnaires documents will be kept until the completion of the researcher's dissertation requirements, which will aim to be the end of Fall 2016 but could extend to Spring 2017 at most, and then destroyed/deleted as it is not expected it will be needed for future research.

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to you will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not

detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate it with you, or with your participation in any study.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the research team will have access to the recordings. Recordings will be kept until the dissertation defense, which is planned by December 2016, and then erased.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?

Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher **Guillermo Martinez III** at phone/email for any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed.

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the study number is **00002030**.

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471- 8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Oral Consent for Participation

Your participation is voluntary and you may leave the study at any time. By receipt of this document and through verbal affirmation for consent you agree to part of this research study. By agreeing to participate you agree to fill out a questionnaire and participate in two interviews, total of which would be about three hours of your time.

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, procedures, benefits, and the risks involved in this research study.

Print Name of Person obtaining consent Date

Signature of Person obtaining consent Date

Print Name of Participant Date

Signature of Participant Date

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