



The National Study on Latino Male Achievement in Higher Education

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Latinas/os are less likely to graduate from high school, matriculate to four-year institutions, and earn a baccalaureate in comparison to most racial/ethnic groups (Fry, 2002; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). Although these studies highlight disparities that persist between Latinas/os and other racial/ethnic groups, they draw attention away from the gender gap that exists within the Latino community. NCES data indicates that Latina females outpaced Latino males in high school completion rates by a margin of ten percentage points (Aud et al., 2010). Between 1987 and 2006, the college enrollment rates for Latinas increased from 18 percent to 31 percent; whereas, Latinos only increased from 17 percent to 21 percent during the same period (Ryu, 2008). Since 2000, the gap between Latinas and Latinos appears to be widening. College completion rates among Latinas/os are equally problematic. In comparison to Latinas (45.7%), approximately one-third of Latinos (37.5%) who started college in 2004 earned a bachelor's degree within six years (Aud et al., 2010).



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In response to this crisis, Dr. David Pérez II launched *The National Study on Latino Male Achievement in Higher Education (TNSLMA)* in 2014. The qualitative studies referenced in this brief are based on TNSLMA and seek to address concerns about “Latino males are effectively vanishing from the American higher education pipeline” (Sáenz and Ponjuan, 2009, p. 54). Rather than focusing on factors that contribute the underrepresentation and underperformance of Latino male college students, TNSLMA integrates two asset-based theories—Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework and Schreiner’s (2010) thriving quotient, to understand how 100 Latino males employed different forms of capital to thrive academically, intrapersonally, and interpersonally at 20 selective universities. TNSLMA represents the first national and largest qualitative study to focus on how Latino males conceptualize and embody success in higher education.

Over the Ivy Wall: Latino Male Achievers Nurturing Cultural Wealth at a Highly Selective, Predominantly White Institution

This study illuminates how participation in Latino student organizations nurtured cultural wealth among ten Latino males at a highly selective, predominantly White institution. Using Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework, participants reported that Latino student organizations (LSO) served as an important source of social capital. LSOs facilitated participants’ social transition to college and provided opportunities for student-leadership in service of the Latino community. Participants nurtured and sustained the navigational capital through LSOs in two distinct ways. They developed skills that enhanced their effectiveness as campus leaders and supported their peers in acquiring resources needed to successfully navigate college... Additionally, Latino male achievers employed resistant capital by engaging in co-curricular activities that enhanced the campus climate for marginalized communities. Participants advocated to have financial aid packages published in Spanish, participated in recruitment initiatives, and advocated for other resources on behalf of racial/ethnic students. Although Latino male achievers derived numerous benefits from their involvement in LSOs, the degree to which participants could make use of these networks was based on their ability to communicate in Spanish. Implications for policy and practice focus on nurturing community cultural wealth among Latino male college students.

Cultivando Logradores: Nurturing and Sustaining Latino Male Success in Higher Education

Little is known about the factors that contribute to Latino male success in higher education. In this study, Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework provides an asset-based perspective to illuminate how Latino males used different forms of capital to nurture and sustain their dispositions to succeed at a selective, predominantly White institution. The major findings were divided into two sections: 1) Nurturing cultural wealth prior to college, and 2) Sustaining cultural wealth in college. Parents and college preparatory programs played an integral in nurturing Latino male achievers’ cultural wealth. Families contributed to participants’ dispositions to succeed by nurturing both aspirational capital and familial capital. Parents used linguistic capital to nurture their children’s educational aspirations. Whereas one participant derived aspirational capital from hearing stories about his parents graduating from Ivy League institutions, another participant gained aspirational capital from hearing about the hardships his parents endured as immigrants. Familial capital also nurtured participants’ dispositions to serve others and to define success not only in terms of academic excellence but also community engagement. Additionally, college preparatory programs nurtured social capital and navigational capital. These programs empowered students to develop the resilience needed to effectively navigate racially hostile educational environments and prepared them to negotiate their minority status in predominantly White educational settings.

Although participants entered college with different forms of capital, they differed in the degree to which they sustained their cultural wealth based on whether and to what extent they found support. Peers and mentors played an integral in sustaining Latino male achievers' cultural wealth. Participants noted how bridge programs facilitated connections to peers and mentors that allowed them to transfer social capital to college. Peers modeled how to use navigational capital to succeed. Bridge programs also equipped participants with navigational capital, by teaching students how to recognize structural forces that undermined their success in college. In addition to connecting with racial/ethnic minority students, participants were able to forge positive relationships with mentors who engaged students in undergraduate research and other educationally purposeful activities that sustained their aspirations when encountering opposition. Implications for research, policy, and practice focus on helping Latino males transfer and translate their cultural wealth to college.

Exploring the Nexus Between Community Cultural Wealth and the Academic and Social Experiences of Latino Male Achievers at Two Predominantly White Research Universities

This study extends research on high-achieving racial/ethnic minority students by focusing on Latino males at selective postsecondary institutions. Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth is used to illuminate how two Latino male achievers employed linguistic, navigational, and resistant capital enhance their academic and social outcomes in college. Participants reported that the ability to communicate in Spanish served as a vital source of linguistic capital, in at least three ways: 1) Affirming their ethnic identity, 2) Minimizing the deleterious effects of microaggressions, and 3) Establishing diverse peer networks that nurtured additional forms of cultural wealth. Although Latino male achievers did not directly experience overt discrimination, they adopted oppositional behavioral patterns that challenged their White and racial/ethnic minority peers. This was evident mainly by participants achieving at high academic levels and assuming leadership positions in student organizations to promote change on campus. Their efforts enhanced the campus climate for other underrepresented students. Moreover, Latino male achievers perceived that interacting with diverse peers honed skills needed to navigate environments where they were underrepresented. These dispositions appeared to be inherent among Latino male achievers; however, they noted that parental figures played an important role in nurturing the skills needed to interact with diverse peer groups. For example, one participant shared how his mother used her dental practice to serve undocumented immigrants and economically advantaged people around the world. Lastly, Latino male achievers equated success with the ability to serve their community. While they drew on linguistic, resistant, and navigational capital to facilitate their transition, participants used cultural wealth to help others achieve equally favorable outcomes. Implications focus on promoting equitable academic and social outcomes for Latino males at selective postsecondary institutions.

Conclusions

Researchers, policymakers, and educators can draw several conclusions from the studies presented in this research brief. First, Latino males employ different forms of capital to maintain their educational trajectories and achieve positive outcomes in college. Second, these studies illuminate how Latino males used different forms of capital to nurture and sustain their dispositions to succeed at selective, predominantly White institutions. While parents and college preparatory programs nurtured participants' cultural wealth before college, mentors and peers sustained their dispositions to succeed during college. Finally, Latino-based student organizations serve as a vital source of social capital, which nurtures navigational and resistant capital, but is dependent on linguistic capital. The National Study on Latino Male Achievement in Higher Education underscores the importance of creating and sustaining P-20 educational systems that value and foster cultural wealth among Latino males. Moreover, the perspectives offered by Latino male achievers can result in best practices, effective policies, and future lines of inquiry that contribute to the success of Latino males in higher education.

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