"Sí Se Puede" Latino Students Can Succeed in School: A Success Case Method Study

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“SÍ SE PUEDE” LATINO STUDENTS CAN SUCCEED IN SCHOOL: A SUCCESS CASE METHOD STUDY

by

Manuel J. Brenes

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of The Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology Advisor: Brooks Applegate, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University Kalamazoo, Michigan December 2012
In public schools about one fourth of the students identify themselves as Latinos or of Hispanic origin. Unfortunately of those Latino children who began at the elementary level, only 40% of them will graduate from high school and about 11% of high school graduates will go on to postsecondary school. In order to improve these numbers, educators and policymakers cannot ignore the needs of this marginalized population.

This study focused on protective and risk factors that influence Latino student’s academic success and continuation into postsecondary school. This study furthermore explored how the Success Case Method (SCM), an evaluation technique used primarily in the business world, can be successfully applied in the field of education to study a marginalized population.

Key findings from this study reveal slightly different factors from traditional studies on the risks and protective factors of Latino students’ academic success. The findings from this study indicated that personal motivation, personal pride, parental support, adequate school programs and the impact of peers were, in that order, the reasons participants indicated as positive factors in their success. On the other hand, the study revealed that the lack of personal motivation and limited educational aspirations of
young Latinos are primary risks factors for young Latinos’ lack of educational success. The family was identified to be a risk factor due to inadequate parental skills and having a detrimental effect to their success. Another risk factor was the lack of school involvement, an unsympathetic school environment where the needs of Latino students are not being met. Lastly, the study revealed that peer acceptance was a strong risk factor for young Latinos. In their desire to please their friends, school and academic goals turned out to be less important.

If Latinos are going to succeed in their educational aspirations and overcome their academic failures, a collective and early effort among students, parents, and schools is required. This study concludes by offering recommendations for future research investigating the Latino educational plight and for educators whose day-to-day behavior influences these young students.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My father, Ismael did not know how to read and write because he was from a small village where there was no school, but I remember his words: “Son, I want you to study and do well in school so that someday you could have a cartoncito [diploma] to succeed in life.” My mother Maria Celia told my elementary school principal on my first day of school: “Don Chico, here is my son; he comes to school to study, to learn and behave. If he misbehaves, you punish him here at the school, you let me know and I will also punish him when he gets home.” These might be the “old ways” of parenting and education, but they worked for me. I believe education has been part of my entire life because I have been going to school all my life and because I have been working in the field of education for about 40 years.

My life has been a long journey with mountains and valleys, a pathway filled with adventures, struggles and personal satisfactions, but not without having to overcome adversity and sometimes the blessings of people, including strangers that were willing to give me a hand and the encouragement to pursue my career and dreams.

I am first grateful to my family, my wife Connie and my children, Michael, Melissa, Melanie and Michelle for their love and understanding. Thank you for accepting me with my strengths and limitations and for making education an important role in your personal success. Your love, support and confidence has been my best encouragement.

I am grateful to my committee chair, Dr. Brooks Applegate. The measurement and research classes were an inspiration and a challenge, but provided me with a wider
Acknowledgments—Continued

perspective about analyzing data and the practical applications in the workplace. Thank you also to Dr. Jessaca Spybrook for her willingness to be part of this committee, her guidance and recommendations with the final draft. My gratitude goes also to my third committee member, Dr. Karen Vocke, for her confidence and support in this project. Her interest to improve education for the migrant Latino population has been an inspiration.

This study could not have been possible without the willing participation of the Latino youth and their parents and their interest to be part of a study that might bring opportunities for success to other Latinos across the country. I am also grateful to Julie Devers for the endless corrections that she did proofreading my different drafts. Without the help of everyone I would not have been able to complete this study. Thank you for your support.

Manuel J. Brenes
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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Going to college and earning a degree has become not only an aspiration but also a requirement in today’s society (Porter, 2002). According to the U.S. Census (2010), individuals graduating with a college degree earn much more than those having only a high school diploma and we all benefit from an educated community. Unfortunately, for many years, only a few Latinos have had access to postsecondary education. At the postsecondary level, students historically underrepresented are minority students, those from low-income backgrounds, and first-generation students (born in the United States of immigrant parents). Those who graduated from high school are ill prepared for, and tend to struggle through postsecondary education (Swail, Cabrera, Lee, & Williams, 2004).

The estimated Latino population of the United States as of April 1, 2010, is 50.5 million, making people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest ethnic or race minority, about 16% of the nation's total population. The Hispanic population increased by 15.2 million between 2000 and 2010, accounting for over half of the 27.3 million added to the total population of the United States. At this rate, by July 1, 2050, the projected Latino population in the United States will be 132.8 million or 30% of the nation’s population (U.S. Census, 2010). Despite the increase in the overall Latino population, only 54.9% of them are graduating from high school (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010), and no more than 10% complete postsecondary education (Indiana Latino Institute, 2009).
Statistical reports from the U.S. Census (2010) indicated that Latinos are the fastest-growing ethnic group, but the most poorly educated (Folger & Nam, 2007). Although “a large gap exists between the college completion rates of whites and blacks,” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; Adams, 2011) both groups showed steady growth, 34.0% to 37.65% for Whites, and 21.0% to 25.4% for Blacks from 2005-2008. However, the growth in college degrees for Latinos has increased from 12.0% to 19.2% during the same time they are still below in comparison with the other groups (Gándara, 2010).

Educational practitioners and policy makers need to understand that to close the achievement gap and improve the academic performance of Latinos, a collective effort to meet their academic needs will be required (Gándara & Bial, 2001).

Latino students are an integral part of the future of the United States, and they will become a vital part of the workforce in this country when they reach adulthood. However, Latino students are experiencing a high dropout rate of 45% at the high school level (U.S. Census, 2010) that has economic consequences for them, their families and local communities (Sieh, 2007). While it is easy to dismiss the high dropout rate as a result of Latino students not being motivated or not intellectually capable of completing public education, it does little to motivate one’s understanding of the problem. It is much more difficult to look at the risk factors preventing them to succeed in school and finding viable solutions.

In an effort to find viable solutions to this problem, this researcher collected and reviewed data on the representation of Latinos at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Previous research contributions were incorporated (Miller, 2005; Swail, Cabrera, Lee, & Williams, 2005) that outlined the pathways for Latinos to complete high school and move
on to pursue postsecondary education. A number of protective factors from previous studies were examined for gaining insight into how motivated and prepared these students were for postsecondary work. Further, identified risk factors contributing to this “educational divide” and the protective factors leading to Latino success thus informing ways to begin the process of narrowing the gap were incorporated in the study. The summary and recommendations in Chapter V provide an opportunity to address strategies to reduce the dropout rate, and how to increase the number of Latinos to achieve academic success.

Background

Cultural Context

In order to understand the growth of Latinos in this country, it is necessary to appreciate the relationship between their culture of origin and how they are adapting to the American culture (Contreras, Kerns & Neal-Barnett, 2002). Contreras, et al, (2002) emphasized that understanding Latino values in terms of culture and environment provides an opportunity to adjust services, education and interventions intended to serve this group.

In his model of the “ecology of human development,” Bronfenbrenner (1979) acknowledged that humans do not develop in isolation, but rather in relation to their families, homes, schools, communities, and societies. Within this model, according to Suro (2007), nothing is more identifiable to the Latino identity than the family (la familia). However, according to Garrido (2004) there has been, in this country, a consistent breakdown of the traditional family structure over the past half-century among
all cultures including Latino families. Because of this breakdown many Latinos find themselves marginalized, uneducated and without appropriate representation in most sectors of society (Skogrand, Hatch, & Singh, A. 2005). Factors affecting the breakdown of Latino families include, single parent, unmarried, out-of-wedlock child rearing, and multiple families sharing a home; added to these issues is the fact that 11.2 million Latinos are undocumented (McDonald, 2006). However, regardless of the difficulties, the traditional culture and nature of the Hispanic people provides a strong sense of unity. This solidarity is expressed by their sense of community through healthy and strong family (familia) traditions with a creative network of resources. Their willingness to help each other along with their ability to improvise resources if necessary is part of the support system for the future of Hispanic families and their unique goals (Barbosa & Hurley, 2006).

Determining Success

Padrón, Waxman & Rivera, (2002) and Pérez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado & Cortés (2009) have shown there are a number of risk factors (e.g. language, segregated neighborhoods/schools) that increase the chances of Latino students being unsuccessful in K-12 school and beyond. It is important to identify those protective factors (e.g. qualified teachers, curriculum) that if properly fostered, can provide the safeguards and reduce conditions of risk. Consequently, if risk can be reduced while increasing protection throughout the course of a young Latino’s development, it is possible to promote academic success. Padrón, Waxman, and Rivera (2002), Glennie and Stearns (2002), and Mercedes (2007) have identified both risk factors hindering success and
protective factors that promote success as related to high school graduation and enrollment in postsecondary education.

Pérez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, and Cortés (2009) have hypothesized that some Latino students, due to their legal and social marginalization, experience these additional risk factors. Furthermore, in their hypothesis these researchers affirmed that students exposed to risk factors (e.g. language barrier, discrimination, low parental education, etc.), tend to struggle in school. On the other hand, students in an environment with personal and environmental protective factors (e.g. supportive parents, friends and participation in school activities, etc.), have exhibited increased levels of academic success due to personal and environment resources (Pérez, et al., 2009, Abstract).

Some factors tend to be the responsibility of the federal, state or local government including access, or lack of access, to health care. According to Goldsmith (2003), these services are commonly provided in segregated (poor) neighborhoods. Other factors, such as teacher quality and preparedness, effectiveness of bilingual programs, quality of school facilities, availability and up to date resources, and the implementation of an inclusive curriculum are very much within the scope of schools (Gándara, 2010). According to Gándara and Contreras (2009), language factors have been addressed by some of the schools, but financial resources and the role of the family are beyond the responsibility of schools and need to be addressed by local communities.

K-12 Education Preparation

It is in the best interest of the United States government to ensure the success of its population by maintaining the quality of education they receive. According to a report
from the U.S. Department of Education Common Core of Data (2010), individuals who receive formal education typically go on to work in better paying careers and are more financially self-sufficient. As a result, the United States has financed a number of education programs (e.g. Initiative on Educational Excellence for Latinos from President George H.W. Bush in 1990 and President Barak Obama in 2010). These programs were designed to increase literacy (including English as a Second Language), establish tougher educational standards, provide equal educational opportunities and promote individualized success (Johnson, 2010).

Researchers, policymakers, and educators are placing special interest on what becomes of students as they progress through the K-12 educational system and move on to postsecondary institutions (Swail, 2005). A stringent accountability on student success is being required before federal funding is funneled to the states. Educational stakeholders have expressed similar concerns and are demanding that, when drafting public policy and educational policies, they give proper consideration to what the future will be for students (Swail, 2005). With these concerns in perspective, this study intends to address these issues and build a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing Latino youth as they progress to postsecondary education and obtain a college degree. Further consideration needs to be given to the complexity of their background and the different educational challenges faced by Latino students according to Zepeda, Varela & Morales (2004).

Education legacy (e.g. parent education/ approaches to child rearing), access to early childhood programs (Padron, Waxman & Rivera, 2002), family income (often below the poverty level), are considered as family challenges. In addition, immigration...
status (parents and children), neighborhood experiences (low income housing), and lack of postsecondary aspirations (few role models with college degrees), are all considered factors having an effect on K-12 education preparation according to the National Center for Mental Health Prevention & Youth Violence Prevention (NCMHP & YVP, 2010).

Another educational challenge facing Latinos refers to their preparation for postsecondary education within the K-12 public school. Administrators at postsecondary institutions have expressed concern about the preparedness of students entering two- and four-year college programs (Llagas, 2003). To overcome this challenge, deficiencies in the educational experiences of Latinos (e.g. second language acquisition) need to be addressed in early grades. One key to successfully meeting the needs of Latino students according to Tienda and Mitchell, (2006), is to ensure that support to students is provided consistently rather than in disconnected interventions (e.g. purposefully implemented according to the needs of the student).

In an effort to improve the success of Latino students to meet their educational needs, some school districts have established supplemental programs including, English as a Second Language (ESL), Bilingual Support, Sheltered English Instruction, Dual Language, Push-in, Pullout, etc. (CAL, 2012 & NCELA, 2005). These programs are intended to increase language acquisition, reduce the number of Latinos leaving the schools and provide the language proficiency necessary for academic success. The effectiveness of these programs, educational practices and district policies will be further discussed in Chapter II.
Economic Incentives for Marginalized Students

Investing in education is good for everyone. Educated individuals usually earn higher salaries with benefits to the individual and society as a whole (Becker, 2008). The earnings power of better-educated people is almost 10 times more than those with only high school. Latino students are starting to recognize the hidden benefit of education as the key to higher earnings. These aspirations may affect the perception of their own poverty and lead to a better economic situation. Studies conducted by Welch (2001), and the U.S. Census (2010), indicated that a high school or college education in the United States can greatly increase a person’s income. The benefits of a college education are noted. However, it is also important to note that tuition and fees for college have risen by about 20% in the last decade (NCELA, 2010). Reductions in federal grants and the increase in college tuition require an effective combination of economic subsidies (not available if a student does not have a legal immigration status) and incentives to entice Latino students to “try” education as an opportunity to improve their economic condition.

Some communities have created incentives intended to motivate individuals to act in certain ways or adopt certain practices (IFAD, 2010). These incentives are measured in terms of the direct economic benefits to the community, usually from increased production or productivity. Johnson, (2011) a keynote speaker at the Michigan Grantmakers 39th Annual Conference in Kalamazoo stated “if the number of college graduates in America were to increase by only 10 % this would translates into $58 trillion over the next 40 years. Those graduates would become productive workers contributing to the increase of the nation’s gross domestic production by 0.7 % a year.” This rationale might have been the underlying principle behind a group of anonymous donors who
decided to establish the Kalamazoo Promise (Promise), (Miller-Adams, 2011). There are other communities across the United States with similar programs, such as: The Pittsburgh Promise (Ghubril, 2011), El Dorado Promise, Arkansas (Watson, 2008), The Denver Promise (Allison, 2007), The “Core Philly” program in Philadelphia (Duhart-Collins & Jones, 2005), and The California-based “Questbridge” Program (Evans, 2009). These programs are intended to assist at-risk students with additional support in college costs. The Promise was the “first dollar in” program (Allison, 2007) not taking advantage of Federal and State aid and does not require legal immigration status as a qualifying condition. If Latinos are going to take advantage of this scholarship, students and their family need to comprehend the scope, requirements, and expectations of this program.

The Promise is a scholarship program available to all K-12 students graduating from the Public School District (KPS) of the City of Kalamazoo, Michigan. The program was unveiled on November 10, 2005, as a pledge by a group of anonymous donors interested with the promotion of education and economic growth of the community” (Bartik & Miller-Adams, 2009). The Promise provides all graduates of KPS who attended at least since 9th grade with 65% or more of the tuition for attending a public university or community college in Michigan. KPS graduates who attended since kindergarten get 100% of their tuition paid (Bartik & Miller-Adams, 2009).

The Promise has played an important role as an economic incentive for Latinos who consider themselves marginalized linguistically, culturally and economically. The long-term impact to the Latino community will require more data and further studies, but the initial significance that this scholarship program is already providing young Latinos
will be discussed throughout this study. Table 1 illustrates the number of students from different ethnic/racial backgrounds who were eligible and who took advantage of the Promise from 2006 to 2011.

Table 1

\textit{KPS Graduates/Eligible to Receive the Kalamazoo Promise (2006-2011)}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>4/3</td>
<td>6/2</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>5/4</td>
<td>4/3</td>
<td>26/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>196/144</td>
<td>259/219</td>
<td>247/207</td>
<td>249/219</td>
<td>267/229</td>
<td>249/216</td>
<td>1467/1234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/P I</td>
<td>8/5</td>
<td>16/13</td>
<td>12/10</td>
<td>19/9</td>
<td>15/13</td>
<td>12/10</td>
<td>73/60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>35/28</td>
<td>24/21</td>
<td>24/22</td>
<td>54/44</td>
<td>39/34</td>
<td>37/33</td>
<td>213/182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>275/230</td>
<td>274/248</td>
<td>263/233</td>
<td>220/199</td>
<td>223/199</td>
<td>225/208</td>
<td>1480/1317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers indicate males/females.
Source: Data with permission from the Kalamazoo Promise Office (2012).

Evaluation Research and Challenges in Evaluating Individuals

When evaluators design or plan evaluations, they need to consider how each component of the evaluation needs to be done. For example, in his evaluation model, Patton (2002), indicated that, if using the Utilization-Focused Evaluation (U-FE) model, the evaluator needs to start with the premise that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use. He pointed out that how the practitioner intends to use it is the focus of a utilization-focused evaluation. Patton also indicated that this type of evaluation is highly personal and only appropriate for particular circumstances. The evaluation works by clearly identifying who the primary users are, who has the responsibility to apply evaluation findings and who will implement the recommendations generated from the study.
In this study, the researcher follows Patton’s model to be applied with a particular population sample and foresees specific findings with potential applications for school districts with Latino population. With the premise that the evaluation findings would be recommended for implementation, a decision was made to take advantage of the Success Case Method (SCM) (Brinkerhoff, 2003) as an appropriate method for this situation. The design and simplicity of the SCM allowed situational responsiveness (current conditions of Latino students) and guided the interactive process (interviews) between the evaluator and the primary intended participants. In this study, the researcher followed a development process (concerned with the enrichment of cultural attitudes, experiences, and aspirations) to identify individual strengths and weaknesses, and to establish success goals. This process included qualitative data with the focus in evaluation to identify a primary group of users (low-income Latinos) to determine findings regarding protective and risk factor for Latinos and put forward specific recommendations (Patton, 2002; Boswell & Boudreau, 1999).

In this research, selected features of the SCM were extracted and applied to determine what factors have a positive impact and which factors have a negative impact during the educational experience of low-income Latino students. The concept of evaluation, in this case the evaluation of (Latino) students’ educational attainment, is a “participatory evaluation” (Gawler, 2005). This study intends to evaluate students, their parents, and school settings to make the findings relevant and meaningful through participation, but also to build capacity for engaging in a process of change (Patton, 2002).
The case study research method has been applied according to Yin (2009) as “an empirical inquiry to investigate contemporary phenomenon within a real life context.” (p. 5). The SCM in this case was applied to investigate factors determining the academic success or non-success of Latino students. This study was intended to be a contribution to the educational knowledge of individuals (students), group (low socio-economic Latinos), and organizations (urban schools) to strive for academic success. Even though, some researchers (Bergh & Ketchen, 2009) consider the case study method to be “soft” research, this is not the case because systematic procedures (selection of participants, the interviewing process, and thorough analysis) are integral to case study research.

Of the three types of case studies: (1) explanatory or causal, (2) descriptive, and (3) exploratory; the explanatory, or causal type, can be used to explore causation in order to find underlying principles (Yin, 2009). To study Latino’s academic successes, an explanatory case study approach with extensive interviews (depth and detail) using a semi-structured but sub-divided interview protocol was used (Thomas, 2011). The explanatory feature of this study took in consideration a holistic approach to analyze meaningful characteristics of real life events. The process included events such as individual life experiences and aspirations, family interactions, small group behavior, school performances, and program implementations (Thomas, 2011).

The researcher realizes that there are more complex evaluation approaches. Flyvbjerg (2006) favored the use of extensive data (e.g. information-oriented sampling and/or combined random sampling) with experimental design frameworks intended to assess programs or to identify effective change strategies that decision makers can use. Those approaches often require incorporating control groups and other techniques for
analyzing variance and partialling out confounding factors (Cherulnik, 2001) in hopes of understanding the effectiveness of schools or educational programs.

Even if other evaluation approaches are more comprehensive and detailed, according to Brinkerhoff (2005), in some cases, they are far too burdensome in time and money. In addition, the mobility (difficulty to locate) of the population to be included in this study presented a challenge. The uniqueness of the SCM (use of a small sample), provided an opportunity to move forward with the study. Critics of the SCM study method (Ellinger, Watkins & Marsick, 2009; Soy, 1996) believe the study of a small number of cases can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings. Yin (2011) believes that because each person has a different outlook toward various events, this type of approach can result in limited solutions for the same problem and cannot be generalized. In his research, Stake, (1995) argued that the intense exposure of the case study may predispose the findings. Some researches (e.g., Hamel, Dufour & Fortin, 1993) think of case study research as no more than an exploratory tool. However, researchers like Stake continued to use the case study research method with success in studies requiring good planning and with real-life issues or problems.

This researcher intended to take advantage of the SCM as an alternative method in the field of education to determine what was working helping Latino students to succeed in school, and what was not working and pushing them away from academic success. According to Brinkerhoff (2003), in business settings, the SCM has demonstrated reasonable rigor and accuracy and can produced credible evidence in determining what is working and what is not working. This study explores to find what works for Latinos to succeed and what is not working hindering their success.
Research Questions

The research literature is full of discussions about the plight of Latino students (Alvarez, 2012; Jones & Bou-Waked, 2007; Pew U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2001, 2003; Pew Hispanic Center, 2004; Rubenstein-Avila, 2003). Some studies focus on the obstacles that these students encounter as compared to other ethnic groups (Bridgeland, DiJulio & Burke-Morison, 2006; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001). Other studies focus on states with large Latino population, large urban school districts or college campuses (Fry, 2003; Pidcock, Fisher & Munsch, 20013). Some of these are longitudinal studies using broader databases and complex analyses (Pérez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado & Cortés, 2009), while still others use approaches requiring limited data and even less analysis (Swail, Cabrera & Lee, 2004).

This study followed the five components from the SCM (Brinkerhoff, 2003) to facilitate identification of risk factors leading to the non-success of young Latinos. It also sought to identify protective factors that assist in the success of young Latinos to move from high school to college and maintain good academic standing. Embedded within protective and risk factors, this study further considered the financial burden of college tuition and additional fees required for two and four year college degree programs. Students in the low-socio-economic bracket are eligible for financial aid and other scholarships, but this is not the case for undocumented Latinos who are unable to meet the federal requirement of a social security number. In order to qualify for scholarships or government funding scholarship programs, immigration legal status and a social security number are initial requirements.
This study provided evidence for understanding the academic success and non-success of Latino student as they did or did not transition out of high school and subsequently enrolled in postsecondary school. The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. (a) What do successful students, non-successful students, and parents perceive as protective factors that contribute to creating an environment for their academic success? and (b) What do successful students, non-successful students, and parents perceive as risk factors that provide barriers to creating an environment for their academic success?

2. Are there new or previously undocumented risk factors specific to Latino students inhibiting or restricting their academic success?

3. To what degree has the Kalamazoo Promise motivated Latino students to pursue postsecondary educational goals?

4. To what extent can the Success Case Method be used in education as an evaluation tool?

Significance of the Study

The SCM brought substance to this study because it has been used primarily in the business world with organizations trying to renew themselves by seeking new ways of being more effective and competitive (Brinkerhoff, 2003 p. 2). Applying the SCM in the educational field explored the feasibility and value of this evaluation method from a business environment into an arena that can be complex and difficult to evaluate (Brinkerhoff, 2003). The SCM provided an opportunity to use an evaluation method that
is different to competing approaches (e.g. Goal-Based Evaluation, Process-Based Evaluation, Outcome-Based Evaluation, Formative Evaluation, and Summative Evaluation) in order to produce evidence that the stakeholders (parents, school and community) can use to improve the academic outcomes of Latinos. This study applied the principles of the SCM to education comprising two main components: (1) Identifying a small number of potential success and non-success cases, along with in-depth interviews to establish the nature of this success (Bell & McDonald, 2006); and (2) Identifying critical factors to determine how to increase the success of Latino students and considering the improvement of programs and policies in schools.

In addition to the application of the SCM in an education related issue, the study sought to examine the significance of the Kalamazoo Promise as an incentive to the success of Latino students and the inclusion of parents to explore how they perceived their role in the future success or non-success of their children.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study that must be acknowledged. First, due to the mobility of participants, recruitment presented difficulties. The state of the economy, family ties, and immigration status have contributed to the transiency of Latinos making it difficult to determine their whereabouts. Information regarding addresses and phone numbers from the historical data was outdated. A number of potential participants left the area; finding these individuals through relatives and friends presented a challenge that required additional time and resources. Second, although most participants preferred the interviews to be conducted in English, it is hard to predict if
having the interview conducted in Spanish could have generated different data. Third, language and length of the HSRIB protocol was intimidating to some of the participants who had never experienced participating in a study of this nature. Third, participants who were confident in their perception of their own success were more willing to share their experiences, while those who were identified as non-successes, with a few exceptions, were more reluctant of share their knowledge. Fourth, during transcription of the interviews conducted in Spanish, translation was executed simultaneously from Spanish into English which provided a limited record of the actual conversations held. Fifth, the interviewing and documenting of success and non-success cases (4th step of the SCM) was modified from interviewing employees, to interviewing students and parents.

Key Terms

*B.O.B.* – Best-of-the-best. Refers to the identification of the best success cases included in the study.

*Dual Language Program* – Students are taught literacy and academic content in English and in a second language. The goals of dual language are for students to develop high levels of language proficiency and literacy in both program languages, to demonstrate high levels of academic achievement, and by developing an appreciation for and an understanding of diverse cultures.

*ELLs* – English Language Learners.

*Federal Pell Grant Program* – The Federal Pell Grant program provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduate and certain post baccalaureate students to provide access to postsecondary education.
First dollar in – The Denver Scholarship Foundation will give between $2,000 and $6,000 to any Denver Public School senior who qualifies for federal student financial aid and enrolls into an in-state college, university or trade school. The rest of the money will have to come from government aid or private help.

Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) - Income Eligibility Guidelines, to be used in public schools to determine the student’s eligibility for free and reduced price meals.

Grade Point Average (GPA) - Is the average grade earned by a student, calculated by dividing the cumulative points a student earns by the number of credits attempted.

Kalamazoo Promise – A scholarship program funded by a substantial donation from anonymous donors in the City of Kalamazoo, Michigan. It is intended to provide each Kalamazoo Public Schools graduate with the opportunity to attend postsecondary education with up to a 100% tuition scholarship. The scholarship was first announced in 2005.

Latino or Hispanic – The word Latino or Hispanic denotes a group of people with Spanish heritage. Here it will be used interchangeably to describe a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race and whom in general share the same language, similar customs, traditions, values, beliefs, and religion.

Non-success – Is defined as a low-income Latino student that for different reasons lost interest in school and dropped out from high school.

Protective factors – Series of characteristics of parents, caregivers, families, children, schools and community having a positive influence for the optimal development promoting resilience and academic success of Latinos.
Return on Investment (ROI) - A performance measure used to evaluate the efficiency of an investment or to compare the efficiency of a number of different investments. To calculate ROI, the benefit (return) of an investment is divided by the cost of the investment; the result is expressed as a percentage or a ratio.

Risk factors – Series of characteristics coming from parents, caregivers, families, children, schools and community having a negative influence and leading to the non-success of Latinos in schools.

Success – Success is defined as low-income Latino students that have graduated from high school and have completed the first semester at a post-secondary education institution with good standing academic grades, e.g. GPA of 2.0 or better.

W.O.W – Worst-of-the-worst. Refers to the non-success cases to be included in the study.
Cultural Context and Ethnic Differences among Latinos (Sub-populations)

People of Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban origin or descent remain the nation’s three largest Latino country-of-origin groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). While the relative position in population growth of these three groups has remained unchanged, there are four other Latino sub-groups with rapid growth during the last decade: Guatemalans by 180%, Salvadorians by 152%, Colombians by 93%, and Dominicans by 85% (Pew Research Center, 2010). Within the Latino community, the variety among numbers and cultural traditions has proliferated (Fram & Armario, 2010). Latinos are excited to become part of the American society but they also enjoy maintaining their cultural identity, a paradox that reflects the complex belief of the nation’s fastest growing minority (Marcos, 2001; Oboler, 2006).

In a recent survey sponsored by The Pew Hispanic Center (2010), 54% of Latinos indicated that it was important to assimilate into this society, but 66% said Latinos should maintain their distinct culture. Segura & Bowler (2006), political scientists from Stanford University, said the two views are not necessarily at odds. Latinos can uphold their cultural values/traditions and still be fully assimilated into the American society. However, Beltran (2010) stated Latinos clinging to their traditions have trouble assimilating, but at the same time added a multidimensional identity allowing them to be
perceived as Latinos and as Americans. Latinos from all nationalities and native-born Latinos are united by ethnicity and their aspiration to be recognized as a strong force in the progress of this country (Oboler, 2006). They are mobilizing and actively involved in political as well as in social issues (Beltran, 2010). Their voices will foster changes not only in attitudes but also in social behaviors intended to influence the entire nation (Mellander, 2010). Latinos, as they struggle to make this country their home, contribute to the prosperity of America. They are changing from transient to permanent resident workers (and U.S. citizens). They are becoming noticeable in the building of a new America. The contribution of Latinos will be difficult to ignore, and their strong determination is allowing them to be heard (Fraga et al., 2010). The following sections are intended to help to recognize the ethnic differences, the process of assimilation and how different group of Latinos struggle to fit into the American melting pot.

Latinos Born Outside the United States

Latinos in the United States encompass a colorful mosaic of people from 21 Spanish-speaking countries. According to Fram & Armario (2010), an Associate Director for the Washington Press Polling, 46% were born in the U.S., 32% in Mexico, and 22% amongst the Caribbean islands, Central and South America. Six in 10 identified themselves as Catholic, and about one in seven belong to a Protestant denomination. Approximately one in five immigrants arrived to this country in the past 10 years, while nearly a quarter of them have been here more than 10 years.

America’s 47 million Latinos face acute economic (Cammarota, 2000) and political pressures (Nie, 2011; Trueba, 1999). The recent recession has taken a heavy toll
on Latinos whose average income is lower than Whites. Latinos take pride and are resiliently optimistic that brighter opportunities lie ahead; they hold a conviction that the way to get there is by attaining additional education (Nevarez & Rico, 2007). It is a common belief among Latino parents that their children will have more opportunities to find employment if they go to school, learn English and earn a college degree (Nevarez & Rico, 2007). According to the latest U.S. Census (2010), 94% of parents expect their children to pursue a postsecondary degree; this is more than twice the numbers who say their own parents did not have that expectation of them.

According to Fry and Passel (2009), about 35% of the foreign born Latino adolescents are more likely to be supporting or helping to support their family in comparison with 21% of their U.S. born counterparts. Consequently, young immigrant Latinos are limited in their ability to continue post-secondary education due to their financial obligation to help their family. In some cases, they are unable to complete high school, even though they realize that college education plays an important role for success in life (López, Livingston & Kochhar, 2009). Young Latinos tend to agree with parents about the importance of a post-secondary degree in order to get ahead in today’s society. However, the desire and reality to get an actual diploma fall well below when compared with other ethnic or racial groups in this country (U.S. Census, 2010). There is an ambiguous struggle between parents’ abilities to play an active role in education and the students’ desires to help support their families. For many Latino students, families are both inspirational and problematic. López (2009), an assistant director from the Pew Hispanic Center, indicated that Latino parents say they want their children to experience academic success, but they do not know how to support them because they do not have
the “tangible skills” and social network that help teenagers to succeed in high school and help them to enroll in college. According to the Pew Research CPP (2007), among the Latinos (ages 16-25) born outside the U. S., 34% are not interested in school, and 30% say they want to pursue a college degree or more. However, a higher percentage (36%) of foreign-born Latinos indicated that after high school they do not want to continue their education. They prefer to find employment (López, 2009). The reason for the gap when compared with U.S. born Latinos appears to come from an implicit expectation to contribute financially to the needs of the family (López, 2009).

Latinos Born in the United States

In the United States, Latinos still face a complex social relation, as a marginalized group in a societal mechanism that continues to promote stereotypic representations of them as “foreigners,” and the powerful impact that these forces have had on their communities (Vazquez, 2011). Those forces serve as barriers to integration and upward mobility into U.S. society (Kochhar, 2005). Latinos perceive an underhanded suppression of their strengths, and to their contributions to the economic, professional and political domains in U.S. society (Parker-Talwar & Livert, 2008). It is precisely this paradox that maintains *Latinidad* as a negative identity marker in the American public imagination (Zambrana, 2011). Unfortunately, most of the studies and discussions of Latinos have been shrouded by a veil of culture, acculturation, structural racism, discrimination, and inequity presenting Latinos as a group of foreign, marginalized, and poor people (Martinez, 2006).
To understand this phenomenon, it is important to consider the critical historical legacy of Latinos in the U.S. beginning with the Mexican-American War in 1848 and the Spanish-American War in 1898. These two events played an important role dealing with the influx of new immigrants from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba into the United States and consequently changed the economic, political, and diplomatic relations that later played a great role in the immigration of millions of Spanish speaking people (Smelser, Wilson, & Mitchell, 2001). The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo between the United States and Mexico (Griswold del Castillo, 2006) led to the annexation of nearly half of Mexico’s territory, the establishment of a new minority, the Mexican Americans of the Southwest (Englekirk & Marin, 2008; Griswold del Castillo, 2006) and the development of newer communities elsewhere (Nava, 2009).

The Spanish-American war set in motion a new emigration phenomenon with political and economic consequences that later propelled millions of people to immigrate from Puerto Rico and Cuba to this country. Puerto Rico became a “Protectorate” after the United States acquired this island from Spain in 1898. The Cuban’s experience was different. During short periods of military occupations, a small Cuban immigrant community had established in Florida, especially in Miami, until the U.S. turned over sovereignty of the island to the Cubans. With Cuba’s social revolution of 1959, a mass immigration of Cubans arrived in south Florida (Ackerman, 2009).

Latinos have attracted national attention, in part, for the spectacular population growth. Between 1960 and 1996, the total population of Latinos soared from about 6.9 million to 25.3 million, and now, according to the U.S. Census, in 2010 the numbers reach about 50.5 million. This population expansion and the severity of the 2008 U.S.
economic recession have produced significant income inequalities and hardship among Latinos. Studies from the Council of Economic Advisers (2010) stated that a brighter future might be in sight for Latinos where a second generation of Latinos is gradually making progress in their educational attainment. In order to strive for a brighter economic future, Latinos are considering educational success and the inclusion in the American political system as a conduit to improve their social economic status. According to the Pew research CPP (2007), six in ten (60%) of Latinos ages 16 to 25 want to obtain a college degree. This number matches the interest expressed by other ethnic groups (López, 2009).

Determinants of Latino Success

Educational reform needs to be discussed giving serious consideration to the concerns and issues of ethnicity and racial minorities (Rendon & Hope, 1996). It is now evident that because of changing demographics, the education of Latinos has become increasingly important to the future of this nation. This reality reflects the need to foster ongoing research of minority groups in an effort to better understand and address the needs of these students (Minerva, 2004). Researchers have noted that these changing demographics demonstrate that Latinos are becoming an integral part of the future of this country (Cisneros, 2009; González, 2000; Saenz, 2002; Trueba & Bartolomé, 2000). Consequently, it is essential to ensure that minority populations are achieving educational success and thus contributing to the future of the country.

Strong demand exists to demonstrate evidence of student success in K-12 programs as well as in post-secondary education (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu,
Among the more commonly, incorporated elements are quantifiable student success indicators such as enrollment, grades, standardized test scores, graduation rates and continuation in post-secondary education (Johnson & Asera, 1999; Plucker & Burroughs, 2010). Student success is hard to measure due to the difficulty in determining satisfaction with personal experiences and how comfortable they feel in school (Dinh, 2011; NRC, 2011). In addition, some researchers have indicated that student’s motivation, impression of institutional environment and their willingness and reasons to attend school are indicators of educational achievement (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; Strauss & Volkwein, 2002). According to Coll & Stewart (2008), the desire for social integration or the degree of satisfaction in the school environment and the ability to belong to one or more affinity groups can also be an indicator of their success.

The trajectory for academic success, according to Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek (2006), includes a rigorous academic preparation in elementary and secondary school (this includes becoming proficient in all domains of language acquisition, speaking, listening, reading, writing and comprehension). This academic preparation includes critical thinking, scientific literacy, and quantitative skills. In addition, students need to develop high levels of personal functioning represented by self-awareness, self-worth, social competence, and sense of purpose. Researchers (Adelman, 2004; Baxter-Magolda, 2001) have explored the literature in their effort to measure and determine the importance of success. Studies conducted by Gregory (2003), indicated that a handful of additional elements of student success (i.e. “goals or purposes”, “lifestyle factors” and “personal traits and characteristics”) have emerged, representing new dimensions and new variations with common indicators, which can present a challenge to measure. In
addition, researchers like Schreiner (2012) & Barton (2012) identified a handful of success indicators such as life skills, time management, appreciation for human differences, commitment to democratic values and capacity to work effectively with people from different backgrounds that are traits much more difficult to assess (Chaltin, 2010). These indicators need to be addressed in the context of an economic necessity with the contention that all students who have completed secondary education should have the opportunity to further their education (Laureano, Parrino, Poulson, Tuttle, Nettles, Oliver, Hudson & Fountain, 2009).

The complexity and needs of today’s schools tend to be more inclusive and diverse according to their student population (Gurin, Nagda., & López, 2003). In fact, the greater attention given to diversity, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status has led to modified, alternative understanding of student success (Carney, 2002). According to Kao and Thompson (2003), the family background had a profound influence on educational achievement and attainment of Latinos; therefore, this study took into consideration the issues of ethnicity and immigrant group differences. Student success indicators needed to be broadened to connect with different ethnic groups among Latinos. Some may have come from Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Central or South America. In addition, some may be rooted by first, second or third generation and being born in the United States and/or Chicano origin.

Due to their own ethnicity or if they consider themselves a first or second generation, young Latinos might have a different range of reasons to attend school and further their education (Fry, 2002). An Associated Press-Univision poll (2010) indicated that 87% of Latinos (compared with 78% of the overall U.S. population) value higher
education and that academic and social self-confidence and self-esteem are important. Despite a strong belief in the value of education, Latinos fall short of that goal (Alonzo-Zaldivar & Tompson, 2010). In fact, Rendon (1996) found that among Latinos, academic success and the ability to believe in their own ability as learners, and feeling that others cared about them were among the most important indicators of success.

Aspirations for higher education run strong among Latinos, but there is a discrepancy between aspirations and actual attainment, according to Fry, (2003). Student motivation is an area where new understanding has emerged as a factor that influenced a student’s ability and commitment to persist (Meza-Discua, 2011). Studies of underrepresented populations have also identified external factors that affect student persistence such as parental encouragement, support of friends and finances (Braxton, Jones, Hirschy, & Hartley III, 2004; Cabrera et al., 1992; Swail et al., 2005). According to some studies (e.g. Pascarella, Pierson et al., 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Tinto, 2004), persistence, expectations, student effort and other measures of academic success play a significant role in the behavior and characteristics of first generation students.

Economic realities indicate that in spite of the actual recession, U.S. companies will have to start hiring more personnel to replace baby boomers going into retirement (Fry, 2003), and the needs at today’s workplaces are forging the requirements for student success. Therefore, if Latinos account for a growing share of the pool of workers, in order to compete, they need to learn employable skills (Alonzo-Zaldivar & Tompson, 2010). The changing nature of society and the demands of a knowledge-based economy (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2002) are rapidly changing the requirements at the workplace to the extent that a high school education is not enough to secure employment. Across the
country, educational practitioners are under pressure (from business and politicians) to demonstrate that students have gained knowledge and skills that employers expect (Education, 1997). These workforce requirements are aligned with general education outcomes, such as fostering an orientation for inquiry, developing democratic values, and cultivating problem solving skills (Kuh, Kinzie & Buckley, 2006). As the needs for a workforce increase, our society will become increasingly dependent on the socioeconomic development of Latinos. Education is the critical first step in this process and deserves attention from policymakers, district administrators and academicians (Hicklin, 2002).

Protective Factors for Latino Student Success

Latinos might be proud of being the fastest growing non-dominate ethnic group in the United States (U.S. Census, 2010), but they are not proud of being the ethnic group with the lowest level of formal education (NCES, 2010). Data in Table 2 shows that at the college level, only 10% of Latinos have a bachelor’s degree in comparison with 34% of Caucasians and 54% of Asian Americans.

Table 2

*The U.S. Educational Pipeline, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2010*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Entered Elementary</th>
<th>Graduated High School</th>
<th>Graduated College</th>
<th>Graduated Grad School</th>
<th>Graduated Doctorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latina/os</td>
<td>100/100</td>
<td>54/51</td>
<td>11/10</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>0.3/0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>100/100</td>
<td>84/83</td>
<td>28/34</td>
<td>8/11</td>
<td>0.6/1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>100/100</td>
<td>73/71</td>
<td>15/13</td>
<td>5/4</td>
<td>0.3/0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Americans</td>
<td>100/100</td>
<td>72/70</td>
<td>12/11</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>0.4/0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Americans</td>
<td>100/100</td>
<td>78/83</td>
<td>40/48</td>
<td>13/22</td>
<td>1.4/4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The first number in each box represents females/males. Data adapted from The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2010).
Poor Latino population is overrepresented in the United States. About 35.0% of Latino children under 18 are living in poverty compared to 12.4% of White only, non-Hispanic, according to the report from the Income Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the U. S, in 2010. This fact should raise serious concerns because it has repercussions on Latino children attending K-12 school programs and consequently on the reduced number of Latinos obtaining higher education (López, 2009). Poverty has an impact on the education of Latino children because the lack of education inhibits the ability of Latinos to contribute to the long-term economic health of the United States. Consequently, it is important to improve the number of Latinos completing K-12 programs and funnel them into higher education programs.

In her studies, Carranza, (2010) identified family traditions as an important factor in determining the success of young Latinos. She also stated that the family in the Latino community demonstrates resilience against adversity which proves to be a positive factor with respect to why some Latinos graduate from high school and continue furthering their education. A study conducted by Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvain (2007) explored how family experiences contribute to the academic success of Mexican American students. The study found that parents encouraged their children to success even though they were unable to assist their children with class assignments. Latino families, regardless of the education of the parents, tend to value and encourage their children to attend school based on their cultural traditions and family expectations (Wherry, 2012). Parents then are able to guide and strengthen their children’s values and morals by stressing the importance of education and the significance of a strong work ethic (Auerbach, 2006).
Educators concerned with the schooling of Latinos have stressed the importance, especially at the elementary level, to ensure that English language learners master all language acquisition domains and develop good reading habits to raise their proficiency in the second language (Kieffer, 2011). Instructional practices must specifically address the concerns of newly arrived Latino students from different cultures who enroll in the schools and who are required to learn English (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton & Yamauchi, 2000). In his study of academic resilience among undocumented Latino students, Pérez and his colleagues (2009) suggested that despite specific risk factors including legal status and social marginalization, Latino students indicated that, supportive parents, friends, and participation in school activities provided levels of academic success. In an effort to promote Latino success, some districts have favored bilingual education programs yielding higher outcomes with English language learners. Results from a study done by Lindholm-Leary, (2003) stated that the Mexican American students participating in K-12 bilingual education programs had higher grade point averages. Indicators included better school attendance and a reduced number of high school drop-outs compared with English speaking Hispanic students in mainstream programs. Further, the study also demonstrated that English Language Learners (ELL) with longer bilingual education experience had more positive results. The goals of these programs are to promote high levels of bilingual proficiency, improve achievement, and demonstrate positive attitudes toward school, self and others (CAL, 2010).
Risk Factors for Latino Students

Early studies suggested that a disengaged home environment was to blame for the failure or lack of success of Latino students in school (García, 2001). This is more evident among students at risk of failing, where parents are uninvolved and disengaged from school business. However, a more recent study by Rumberger (2011) also stated that the family is considered the most important contributor to success in school, but the background of the family (educated/uneducated or urban/rural) can be interpreted in different ways, from parental involvement to socioeconomic status. In his research, Carpenter (2008) indicated that high achieving children tend to come from parents who have high expectations for them. However, there is a difference between parental expectation (belief in the child’s likely future achievement) and parental aspiration (the desire a parent holds regarding his or her child’s future level of achievement). Family life among poor Latinos is filled with the stresses and demands of balancing work and family life (Schneider & White, 2005). The time parents spend working is affecting their children (delegating all responsibility for the education of their children to the schools). Latino mothers struggle with having to balance both work and household responsibilities (relying sometimes on older children to take care of younger siblings). Latino fathers play an important role in keeping the family together, maintaining traditions and by being the main provider for the entire family. When family responsibilities are at stake, the boys are usually the ones not finishing school because of the financial need to support the family (Carpenter, 2008).

The schools, according to a study from Padrón, Waxman and Rivera (2002), presented several alterable factors contributing to the underachievement of Latino
students: poorly qualified teachers, outdated instructional practices, and at-risk school environment. Studies done by Fry (2003), and Padrón, Waxman, and Rivera (2002) indicated that not having adequately qualified teachers or the inability to provide training to teachers with students who are in the process of acquiring a second language, the raising of academic standards, and insufficient funding for public education were among the factors also contributing to the educational failure of Latino students. According to Vásques (2011), some schools with large Latino populations have teaching practices that emphasize lecture, drill and practice, remediation, and student seatwork especially at the secondary level. There are instructional practices referred by Kuykendall (2004) which would have a positive effect on students. They are contrary to the “pedagogy of poverty” stated by Haberman (1991) which are indications of low level skills and passive instruction. Limited academic success of Latinos is also due to at-risk conditions including the school environment influencing students’ academic success or failure (Padrón, Waxman & Rivera, 2002). Schools and classrooms can motivate students and keep them engaged or they can alienate and eventually drive students out of school. An at-risk school environment (Soza, Yzaguirre & Perilla, 2007) includes: alienation of students and teachers, low expectations of students, high dropout rates for students, and high truancy and discipline problems.

According to a study conducted by August (2002), when considering risk factors, the level of native language literacy tends to impact the acquisition of the second language literacy. The study indicated that Latinos with successful literacy skills in their primary language showed powerful study skills and confidence, while the less successful showed a lack of adequate skills (study skills, self-awareness, and different
conceptualization of time-governance). Less successful students displayed less confidence in body language and speech as well as vague conceptualization of study skills. More successful students, in contrast, were easy to detect through their own self-awareness and confident manner. The successful students demonstrated a stronger sense of their goals and how they would get there. The less successful students were vague in their goal descriptions.

Role of Motivation for the Success of Latinos

According to researchers Anderson and Keith (1997) and Wentzel (2000) there is a strong correlation between personal motivation and academic success in school. But, according to some researchers (e.g. Chauncey & Walser, 2009), there is also the attribution of motivation of Latinos based on the likelihood of attaining success or failure (Bempechat, 2009; Heider, 1958; and McLeod, 2010). There is a strong perception among Latinos that certain events in their lives are attributed to their own internal disposition or due to the characteristics of their external environment (McLeod, 2010). Some Latinos believe that one of the reasons for their failure is due to their own low expectations of future success. This perception likely tends to impact their academic achievement (Navarrete, Batancourt & Flynn, 2007). In addition, among Latinos there is a fatalistic perception that life events are inevitable based on cultural values and the basis for the cause of their failure (Navarrete, Betancourt & Flynn, 2007).

According to some researchers (e.g. Anderson & Keith, 1997; Goodenow & Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001; Grady, 1993; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Wentzel, 2000), student motivation can be defined by academic effort, importance given
to school attendance, educational aspirations, enjoyment of learning, the importance placed on school, personal determination, and how students behave in school. Motivated students are more likely to succeed in school, but this motivation needs to be nourished by parents at home and supported by teachers at school (Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, Gonzáles-Backen, Bamaca, & Zeiders, 2009). According to Alfaro, Umana-Taylor & Bámaca (2006), there is a belief that academic support from fathers tends to be important only for boys, while academic support from mothers seems to be important only to girls. The more support they received collectively, the higher academic motivation reported. Because parents influence their sons and daughters differently, it is important for schools to work with both of them. This is important especially at the secondary level where according to researchers (Chouinard, Vezeay, & Boufdard, 2008; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gorrfried, 2001), academic motivation has been found to decline as adolescents go through school. Academic motivation tends to be influenced by the relationships adolescents have with others, specifically with parents and teachers. In some circumstances, declining academic motivation is due to changes in adolescents’ relationships with others. In their effort to establish independence young adults drift away from parents and other adults. To cope with these issues, some school districts have established school prevention and intervention programs in an effort to increase the academic motivation of Latino students. Consideration is given to Latino culture as family oriented (Garcia, 2001) where parents and extended family play an important role not only in the motivation regarding schooling, but also providing strong guidance concerning continuing their education. For these reasons, it is important that Latino parents begin some type of conversation with their children at an early age with the intent
of stimulating their children: to provide assistance with their schoolwork, to show the children that education is important, to provide information about school, to encourage the children to think about success; and to encourage them to continue their education beyond high school.

The school, especially the support from teachers to Latino youth, seems to be important for both boys and girls; the more help boys and girls reported from their teachers, the higher their academic motivation (Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, & Bámaca, 2006). It is important to ensure that Latino youth graduate from high school, but studies (Chouinard, Vezeau, & Bouffard, 2008; Gottfried et al., 2001) also have found that academic motivation declines as adolescents progress through school. Schools can assist by developing prevention and intervention programs that support Latino students and motivate them to succeed in school and beyond. More studies are needed in this area to better understand the role of academic motivation for Latino students.

Role of School for the Success of Latinos

In order to help Latino students thrive, they need to be reassured of having the ability to succeed. School districts (counselors) need to include them in study programs that focus on improving academic performance and encourage them to enroll in higher level, college-track courses (Meléndez, 2012; Newman, 2011).

The biggest barrier to college education is weak or inadequate academic preparation (Forster, 2006). It is crucial for schools to have adequate programs that help Latinos improve their academic skills, to prepare them for the demands of college (Foster, 2006). In order to meet English language proficiency and the skills Latinos need
in the content area, schools need to provide research based programs accompanied with adequate training for all involved in their education (Robledo-Montecel & Cortez, 2001). These researchers indicated that successful programs for Latinos must include a strong theoretical framework with indicators conductive to the success of limited English proficient (LEP) students. It is also essential that Latino students that come from a home where Spanish is the common language must develop a healthy bicultural orientation to allow them to transition between the worlds of home and school (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Furthermore, according to Cooper, Azmatia, Chavira, and Guallat (2002), students who learn to coordinate both the resources and challenges that exist in the multiple worlds of home, school, peers, and outreach programs, will have higher grades and thus be more likely to be eligible for college.

**K-12 Education Preparation**

**The Role of Education for Latinos**

If we visit elementary, middle and high schools in today’s American public school systems, we notice a larger number of young Latinos (U.S. Census, 2010). On the other hand, due to a wide-range of factors, they are not succeeding in school (Padrón, Waxman & Rivera (2002). Very few Latino children take advantage of pre-school programs (Renero, 2010). Only half of Latinos that started school in elementary complete high school, and those who do graduate are ill-prepared for college (Fry, 2005; NCES, 2003). According to Jamieson, Curry & Martínez (2001), about 19 % of Latinos continue on to postsecondary education, but the numbers continue to decrease indicating that only 10 % graduate or complete professional degree program.
According to López (2009), in a survey conducted in 2009 by the National Survey of Latinos for Latino Samples, nine out of ten (89%) Latino young adults say that education is important for success in life, but only about half that number (48%) finish secondary education, enroll in postsecondary education and ultimately graduate. The survey asked why Latino students do not do as well as others in school. According to López (2009), the survey revealed two main reasons: parents did not play an active role (57%) and their lack of English proficiency (54%). However, the biggest reason for the disparity between the value of education for Latinos and their more modest aspirations to finish school appears to come from financial pressure to support a family (Nevarez & Rico, 2007). In addition to the need to help support their family, other reasons given for dropping out of school include poor English skills, dislike of school and the feeling that they do not need more education to find a job (López, 2009).

While there are signs of educational progress for Latinos (NCES, 2009), in order to close the educational divide between Latino and White students, more work needs to be done to improve the academic performance of Latinos in public schools. Latino children residing in low-income neighborhoods subsist in a state of poverty and educational disparity (Vidal De Haymes, Kilty & Segal, 2000). However, when devoted teachers, charismatic school leaders, parents and community leaders provide the necessary supports to ensure that Latino children can strive at school, the results can be different. These children can outshine, attain their personal goals, and eventually make critical societal contributions (Fernández, 2011). Organizations like the College Board (2007) provided a combination of recommendations and solutions intended to improve the educational status of Latinos in this country. The College Board Advocacy & Policy
Center report (2007) called for the development of “action-oriented practices” to increase educational opportunities and success for Latinos. To meet the goal of educating Latinos it is important to identify, collect and analyze national, state, and local data on the status of Latinos in education (Swail, Cabrera, Lee & Williams, 2005). It was noticed that emphasis was given to the recommendations and solutions being proposed on Latino education in a report presented by Nevarez & Rico (2007) for the College Board. The recurring recommendations and solutions from this study included academic advising, culturally competent teachers, bilingual education programs and a positive school environment. It is important not to ignore the factors in this study that seem to be prevalent among participating Latinos: their undocumented status, feeling discriminated against, gang activity and violence, and the importance of school leaders to ensure the educational achievement of Latinos (Nevarez & Rico, 2007).

Even though research has been conducted (Shoup-Olsen & Skogrand, 2009) in some areas addressing the socioeconomic and educational needs of Latinos, more studies are needed in order to uncover the intricacies of factors impacting Latino educational outcomes. From an economic point of view, Humphrey (2002) indicated that the achievement of Latinos would come from their potential economic gains at the local and national levels. Consequently, the economic resources of Latinos have large economic implications for the United States and internationally (Scoggin, 2012). According to a report from the Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (2009), by 2013 the estimated purchasing power of the Latino population will be around $1,386 billion and will have surpassed other segments of the population in spite of current economic
hardships. As the Latino economy continues its growing influence, consideration must be given to the importance of education for Latinos.

There is an educated workforce shortage (Maldonado & Farmer, 2009); therefore, there is a need to educate this growing population. In the last 10 years according to the Pew Hispanic Center (2010) there has been a surge of Latino students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools—from 12.7% to 19.0%—while the proportion of White students has decreased from 66% to 58%. With these rapid changes in demographics, there is an urgent need to focus on educating and training tomorrow’s workforce. According to Vernez and Mizell (2001), this educational investment could produce a long-term increase in tax revenues and reduce public expenditures in welfare, health care, and law enforcement. Educating Latinos goes beyond economic benefits; educated Latinos are more likely to participate in political and community issues and become included in the democratic ideals of this country (Nevarez & Rico, 2007).

Latinos and Elementary Education

Studies done by Nevarez and Rico (2007) indicated that early exposure to preschool education provides students solid academic foundations in their future academic success. However, reports from the U.S. Department of Education (NCES, 2010), indicated that only 20% of Hispanic three-year-olds were enrolled in early childhood programs in comparison to 42% of Whites and 44% of African Americans (Padrón, Waxman & Rivera, 2002). Among the reasons given for the low enrollment of Latino children in preschool is the cultural belief that the home environment is the best conducive environment to the well-being of children (Nevarez & Rico, 2007). According
to the President’s Advisory Commission on Education Excellence for Hispanic Americans (1996), it seems to be a disconnection due to the belief of Latino parents that the role of preschool should be developing academic skills while educators emphasize child behavior (Nevarez & Rico, 2007). In addition, transportation availability to the sites where services are provided, immunization requirements and lack of information in Spanish are factors leading to low participation (Zoppi, 2006).

Elementary education becomes the entryway to formalized education for Latino students. This stage in their lives is crucial in the shaping of their cognition and social development (Nevarez & Rico, 2007). In order to succeed, Latino children, especially if Spanish is the primary language at home, need to develop strong English language proficiency and a well-rounded literacy foundation (Stringfield & Land, 2001).

Unfortunately, for most Latino children, if a strong foundation in the second language has not been established by the time they are reaching upper elementary their academic performance tends to decline (NCES, 2006, 2009, 2010). Similarly, in the data presented by the U.S. Department of Education and the 2004 National Assessment of Educational Progress there is an indication that Latino students have shown some improvement through the education system primarily at the lower elementary level, but the achievement gap became more evident in upper elementary and secondary levels (NCES, 2009). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP 2004), at grade 4 level, Latino children are already behind in reading and mathematics when compared to White students.

In a report prepared for the College Board, Nevarez & Rico (2007) listed limited parent education, unsuitable school reforms, and limited access to culturally competent
teachers, language barriers, and legal status as some of the reasons leading to the academic problems of Latinos. In earlier studies conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center (2002) it was noticed that schools with high concentration of Latinos were poorly maintained, fiscally underfunded and in some areas staffed with teachers without proper credentials. All these conditions subsequently are being considered as some of the reasons contributing to the low performance of Latino students (Orfield & Lee, 2005). In addition to these conditions, Latino students at the upper elementary school level are already ill equipped to deal with the expected rigor of secondary education due to the lack of adequate academic support (Padrón, Waxman & Rivera, 2002).

Latinos and Secondary Education

As Latino students progress from elementary to secondary school, nearly half do not complete high school on time, (Murillo, 2008) despite the fact that young Latinos are just as likely as other young people to say that college education is important for success (López, 2009). According to Fry (2003), more youth, regardless of their ethnic background, are going to college because the value of education has increased in the job market. This optimistic panorama is eclipsed by the reality that while the dropout rate for Hispanics decreased from 32% in 2000 to 22% in 2006, it is still higher than that of other groups (NCES, 2009). When comparing Latinos with the national high school graduation rate, 32% of the Latino population had graduated by 2000 and by 2008 that number had risen to 58%. However, these numbers are still unacceptable when compared to the national high school graduation rate of 85% (Wolk, 2011).
The preceding sections described some of the factors contributing to the low performance of Latino students. Subsequent studies have indicated that additional factors are to be considered in order to understand the low graduation rate of Latinos. These factors included cultural barriers, which isolate students from the school environment (Smith-Adcock, Daniels, Lee, Villalba & Arce, 2006); and poor parenting and poor English skills (Nevarez & Rico, 2007; Thompson & Junius, 2010). In addition, Latino students are more likely not to be placed in college preparatory courses because of “tracking” policies, services misidentification and misplacement of students as English Language Learners, or the personal perception of the students’ potential (Naverez, & Rico, 2007). Having a non-supportive school climate, inadequate academic advising, and fewer rigorous courses available were other factors given according to the *High School and Beyond* report by the NCES (2009). Inadequacies in academic advising resulted in poor performance in algebra, biology, chemistry and physics courses (Nevarez & Rico, 2007). With such disadvantages, the Latino population’s perception is that opportunities have not been equally accessible to them.

For example, as students move from elementary to secondary education, studies (Ford, 1998; Ramos, 2010) indicate the underrepresentation and sustainability of Latinos in gifted and talented programs and college bound and advanced placement courses. The Hispanic Education Fact Sheet, (2008) reported that only 6.4% of the gifted and talented population is Latino. Comparable results were presented by Borg, et al. (2011) which also uncovered that the low enrollment rates in AP courses were affected by unpreparedness due to the fact that Latino students choose not to take advanced courses or were advised not to continue in earlier pre-AP courses. In addition, a lack of work skills dedicated to
AP rigor and lack of consistent relationships with the school personnel, such as counselors and teachers had an effect on their low numbers. These researchers (Borg, et al., 2011) added that one of the best predictors of college-readiness and success in college has to do with the increasing enrollment of Latino students in AP courses in order to equalize the current imbalanced representation rate. In the end, an accurate assessment of quality of a public school system can be determined by the graduation rate of Latino students and how they are enrolling, retaining, and successfully graduating them to be productive citizens in society (Verdugo, 2006).

From the economic point of view, a high school graduate can earn about 10 times more over a lifetime than a high school dropout. Interestingly enough, Barton (2005) in his study stated that high school dropouts make up 82% of prisoners nationwide. Although some Latino students still do not see college as a viable option, with the current economy that has affected the construction, hospitality, and restaurant industries, (businesses that support a large number of Latinos), Latinos need to consider postsecondary education as one of the main tools to help them to achieve their goals and establish financial stability (Olivera, 2011).

**Latinos and Postsecondary Education**

A closer look at the data from Table 2 indicates that of 100 Latino students who started school in grade one, only 10 of them graduated from college. An explanation to the high attrition rate is provided by the Pew Hispanic Center (2010) survey, indicating that financial pressure to support a family was the main risk factor forcing them to cut short their education during or right after high school. Other reasons also given in the
same survey included poor English skills, a dislike of school and a feeling that they do not need more education for a career they want. Responses from the survey indicated that on average, Latinos do not do as well as other students in school, according to López, Livingston & Kochhar (2009), the reasons given included school environment and poor English skills.

High dropout rates as well as a low college completion rates have been the prevailing trend among Latinos for years (Kewal, Gilbertson, & Provasnik, 2007) where only 48% of them expect to get a college degree compared with 60% of other groups. According to López (2009), this gap is even bigger when young immigrant Latinos (29%) are compared with those who are native born (60%) and who say they plan to get a bachelors’ degree or more.

Latino students enroll in colleges for a variety of reasons (Weissman, Bulakowski, & Jumisko, 1998). According to Fairchild, (2003), individuals with higher education improve their probabilities of securing employment, higher earnings, and job advancement. Fairchild (2003) stated that the motivation of nontraditional students to attend college has to do with the opportunity for the advancement at the workplace. Attraction to college seems to be rooted by a practical reason to achieve higher income. Latino students feel convinced that higher education will bring opportunities, better jobs, greater financial rewards, and personal satisfaction (Rouche & Rouche, 1993). At the same time Weissman et al. (1998) revealed that Latino students credit family members with influencing their decision to pursue postsecondary education. This sentiment has been more prevalent among new immigrants expressing a desire to be the first in the family to go beyond high school and succeed (Glick & White, 2004). In contrast,
according to Cooper et al. (1999), a large majority of Latinos indicated that family responsibilities prevented them from going away to school. According to Pérez & Cortez (2011), some young Latinos had their dreams shattered by the uncertainty of legal immigration status. Undocumented students experience feelings of shame, anger, despair, marginalization, discrimination, anti-immigration sentiment, fear of deportation, and ineligibility for financial aid (Perez & Cortez, 2011).

All of these reasons tend to partially explain the underrepresentation of Latinos in postsecondary institutions. According to the U. S. Department of Education, Common Core of Data report (DECCD, 2011), of the Latinos that graduate from high school, 59% immediately enroll in college; but simply enrolling does not guarantee graduation. Of those enrolled, only 36% of first time Latino students earn a degree within six years compared to 49% of whites (Camacho-Liu, 2011).

**Economic Incentives for Marginalized Students—The Kalamazoo Promise**

A high school counselor indicated that in her experience working with Latino students, she noticed that some of them appeared to not have a vision of their future regarding college education or if college could be affordable to them (López, 2009). This sentiment was affirmed by a young Latina who expressed that because of her undocumented status, there was no reason for her to do well in school because she will not be able to get financial aid or a scholarship to help her to go to college (Fry & Passel, 2009; Nevarez & Rico, 2007). In an effort to help Latinos overcome the financial obstacles and to provide college opportunities, some corporations in coordination with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, Inc. have posted on their website an
extensive list of scholarships available to Latino students to help them further their education (Davis Bell & Bautsch, 2011). Most of these scholarships and grants have conditions that many Latino students are unable to meet, especially those who (along with their parents) do not have legal immigration status to be in this country (Noguera, 2006). This is not the case for Latinos who reside and attend the public schools in Kalamazoo County, Michigan. The anonymous donors of the Kalamazoo Promise (Promise) did not include legal immigration status among the conditions to receive the benefits of this scholarship program. The questions to Latino students: are they missing the Promise because they are not taking advantage of this unique opportunity, or is the Promise missing them because information has not been properly available to them and their families? The Promise pays tuition but no other expenses such as books or room and board, which minimizes the cost of postsecondary education but does not eliminate all additional costs associated with it (Richards, 2010). Any student, whether well-to-do or economically marginalized, attending Kalamazoo Public Schools can be eligible to receive the Kalamazoo Promise and receive up to 100% tuition paid to any community college or public university in the state of Michigan (Bartik & Lachowska, 2012). In addition, students can also qualify for other scholarship programs based on academic merit, family income, artistic, and/or athletic ability (Cunningham & Santiago, 2008). However, undocumented Latino students will have to cope with additional financial challenges to pay for books, room and board and other school related expenses (Zambrana, 2011). The burden of these expenses is another obstacle that needs to be overcome if students need to advance on their path to success (Richards, 2010).
Challenges Evaluating Individuals

Success Case Method vs. Other Methods

Evaluating individuals presents some strategic, ethical and methodological challenges that all evaluation practitioners encounter (Smith, 2002). In this study, a conceptual framework (Figure 1) is used as a guide to a participatory evaluation practice, with emphasis placed on utility. This process assumes that: (a) an evaluation has no value unless it is used, (b) data gathering is used based on the information provided by stakeholders, and (c) assumes that strategies are used to maximize evaluation utility. The conceptual framework (Figure 1) provides a logical sequence of steps based on a program evaluation standard as described by Stufflebeam (2001). According to Smith (2002), when considering evaluation standards, it is important to ask (a) Will the evaluation produce information that is useful (Utility)? (b) Can the evaluation be done with the resources available (Feasibility)? (c) Can the evaluation be done with the proper concern for the people involved (Propriety)? And (d) how accurate is the information gathered from the evaluation (Accuracy)?

Smith (2002) also indicated that when choosing a method to be used for evaluation, the following factors need to be carefully considered: what is to be evaluated, the purpose, resources available, and sometimes factors that can be considered unique to the situation and culture. With these factors in consideration, evaluators choose from different research methods for different purposes, and they also take into consideration the advantages and challenges from each one as well as the type of resources needed to conduct the evaluation (APPEAL, 2001).
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study to Determine Latino Student Academic Success.

This study was not intended to describe all evaluation methods; however, preference and attention were given to the SCM. Brinkerhoff (2003), the author of the SCM, offers an evaluation technique that produces evidence in determining the success
of an organization or how members of the organization need to be involved in the process to make training work (2005). Used primarily in business, this evaluation approach according to Brinkerhoff (2003) is considered to be easier, faster, and cheaper than competing approaches. Using the SCM, business organizations have been able to renew themselves and become more effective and competitive, but application of this method in education has been non-existant.

Knowing that the study could be conducted with a small sample (due to the potential difficulty of locating participants), highlighting only the best and the worst cases, a decision was made to try this process as a ground-breaking potential in the field of education. With this in mind, the study was then charted to expand the realm of the SCM from business to K-12 education. The study modified some of the principles and methodology of the SCM to determine the factors associated with success and non-success of Latino students and how these factors propel these students into or away from postsecondary education. The methodology and the process will be further discussed in Chapter III.

**Conceptual Framework**

This conceptual (theoretical) framework (Figure 1) is intended to illustrate the structure and sequence of the SCM. Latino students are dropping out of school at an alarming rate (Fry, 2003). A reduced number of them graduate from high school (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010) and their numbers are almost invisible in college. This framework provides a background intended to assist with the understanding and appreciation of the Latino culture and to uncover the factors motivating them to stay in
school and continue with postsecondary education. Success or non-success is addressed in the context of how Latino students respond to personal aspirations and their interaction with the family, their peers, and the school.

The first research question (How do Latinos students (a) maximize protective factors and (b) minimize risk factors to create an environment for their academic success?) was intended to address these issues, to provide an understanding of the risk factors to be minimized, and the protective factors to be maximized to facilitate creation of an environment of academic success for Latino students.

The focal point of the second research question (Are there new or previously undocumented risk factors specific to Latino students inhibiting or restricting their academic success?) was to investigate new or previously undocumented risk factors that inhibit academic success and to identify protective factors that can be fostered to boost academic success among Latinos. The structure of the SCM in this study required the identification of the most and least successful Latino students. From the identified pool, a sample was selected for in depth interviews. The design of the questionnaire was intended to yield risk factors impeding success and protective factors fostering the success of Latino students.

The third research question (To what degree has the Kalamazoo Promise motivated Latino students to pursue post-secondary educational goals?) incorporated the Kalamazoo Promise in the study to determine if such a scholarship program had (or had not) a positive impact on Latino success.

Finally, the last question (To what extent the Success Case Method can be used in education as an evaluation tool?) explores the potential of the SCM as a tool to be applied
in education and required that findings be communicated to stakeholders (schools, Latino parents and the community at large).

**Evaluation Research**

Research questions or hypotheses can sometimes be answered through literature review requiring researchers to mine existing data resources considered relevant (Patton, 2011). Information is summarized, analyzed, treated statistically, and results reported. In some circumstances, the issue, problem, question, etc. need to be resolved or answered by analyzing and reporting previous research reports in the literature or from information mined from existing databases (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004). In program evaluation, it is often necessary to describe the rationale for how a program is/was intended to function and/or how to achieve goals and objectives. Such rationale is called the program’s theory, which is integral to explain why a program “worked” or “did not work,” helping to draw conclusions about the implementation or impact of the program, and framing recommendations to make future decisions (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). This study is not intended to evaluate a specific program, it is a research case study based on the analysis of interviews and supported by professional and empirical literature to determine what is working and is not working for Latino students.
CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As previously stated, this research explored factors having a positive or negative impact on the academic success of secondary level Latino students. In Chapter II, previous findings were reviewed in an effort to explore similarities and possible differences among the factors that appear to be contributing to the success or non-success of young Latinos. The benefit of this research was to add educational knowledge that school practitioners and stakeholders can use to increase the academic success rate of Latinos and guide the development of the studies’ methodologies. Most studies have been conducted in cities with large Latino concentrations (Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York City), which favors access to a larger pool of participants. However, this study was conducted in a mid-size urban community of 230,895 inhabitants where approximately 9,959 or 4% of the population is Latino (U.S. Census, 2010).

The limited number of potential participants and their transient nature (many of them from former migrant families) were factors considered in the selection of the SCM and moving forward with the study. As described by Brinkerhoff, (2003), the SCM offered a simple, carefully crafted way of determining how well a new business organizational initiative worked. The SCM proved to be effective in dozens of business organizations, but in this study the researcher intended to break new ground and used this model to explore practical relevance in the education field. The study applied a modified
SCM that included five steps: (1) focusing and planning the success case study, (2) clearly defining what outcomes will be considered success, (3) designing and implementing a survey to search for the best and worst cases, (4) conducting interviews and documenting success cases, and (5) communicating findings, conclusions, and recommendations (Brinkerhoff, 2003).

The structure of the SCM in this study included two basic components. The first part focused on (a) identifying (using historical data) potential and likely “success cases”—the Latino students who were successful in graduating from high school and were in the process of attending college (or enrolled) and (b) identifying “non-success cases”—the Latino students who attended high school but for different reasons were unable to graduate and dropped out of school. In the second part of the SCM study, from the historical list, 738 potential participants were divided into two groups, successful (BOBs) and non-successful (WOWs). Both lists were randomized to minimize selection bias. From the randomized lists, effort was devoted to locate potential participants beginning at the top of the lists. The process to locate potential participants included old addresses, telephone directories, Internet searches, friends and relatives. In cases where the potential participant was unable to be located, the search continued with the next name on the list. Once a potential participant was located and he/she agreed to participate in the study, arranges were made to set date and time for the interview.

In this chapter, the method of analysis is discussed, the process applied to select the subjects for research and the instrumentation used to conduct the research are described, along with the procedures employed and the methodology used to analyze the data. The research addressed the following questions:
1. (a) What do successful students, non-successful students, and parents perceive as protective factors that contribute to creating an environment for their academic success? and (b) What do successful students, non-successful students, and parents perceive as risk factors that provide barriers to creating an environment for their academic success?

The first research question addressed four selected themes extracted from the literature to be used as the framework to bring about from students and parents what they believed can be attributed to the causes of their academic success or non-success. These factors were associated with the value of high school and postsecondary education and included personal perception, the family, the school and other factors. The Kalamazoo Promise was added as a fifth factor to see if such a scholarship program had any bearing on the participants’ success or non-success. The structure of the conversation/questioning was intended to gather information to help in determining which factors related to the five themes had a positive or negative impact on Latino students.

2. Are there new or previously undocumented risk factors specific to Latino students inhibiting or restricting their academic success?

The second question expanded upon the literature reviewed in Chapter II, and it was intended to uncover what previous studies have not revealed regarding risks inhibiting the academic success of young Latinos. The study has made an attempt to explore new or a variation of factors that will be extensively addressed in Chapter IV.

3. To what degree has the Kalamazoo Promise motivated Latino students to pursue postsecondary education goals?
The third question added a distinctive factor related to the economic advantage the participant population had access to whereas the previous research sample did not.

4. To what extent the Success Case Method can be used in the field of education?

The fourth question intended to explore the use of selected components of the SCM as an evaluation model with practical application in the field of education.

Method of Analysis

This study utilized qualitative methodology intended to (a) describe the academic performance of lower socio-economic Latino students (phenomena) within a context of culture and the school setting, (b) determine protective and risk factors influencing success or nonsuccess, and (c) develop viable recommendations to stakeholders (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The case study approach used in this study intended to answer the “how” and “why” in the research questions. The study took into consideration that behavior could not be manipulated, but it was necessary to include conditions considered relevant to the phenomenon under study and hypothesize a connection between the phenomenon and the context of the study (Yin, 2009).

Data collected from this study added richness and provided an opportunity for depth, openness and detail that would not be possible in a quantitative study (Patton, 2002). The research allowed for a deeper understanding of the Latino culture and the struggle of young Latinos as they move through the K-16 educational system. The study stands on the premise that in order to answer the how or why of the research questions, focus was to be given to the identification of the protective and risk factors. These are the factors that need to be fostered or avoided by young Latinos in their quest for academic
success. Previous studies (Carranza, 2010; Fry, 2003; Gaither, 2004; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; García, 2001; Glennie & Stearns, 2002; Hernández, 2005; and Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002), revolved primarily around a core of four factors—poverty, immigration status, language proficiency, and school segregation. The researcher intended to explore if this study uncovers other factors not identified in previous studies and whether or not these new factors would add significant value and contribution to the body of knowledge (Cresswell, 2003). The interviewing process provided an opportunity to delve into areas of personal goals and aspirations, the nuclear family, the school environment, and the role of friends in the life of young Latinos.

Subjects of the Research

The SCM study has a very simple, two-part structure: the location of “success cases” and “non-success cases.” A combination or mixed purposive sample according to Patton (2002) was used in this study. To add credibility to the study, the initial list of participants was randomized (Easton & McColl, 2006) from a pool of 738 Latino students that attended the school district from 2002-2010. Contacting participants presented a challenge due to their mobility and the difficulty of securing addresses or telephone numbers. Initially, the researcher intended to gather a larger pool of participants (30-40), but after four to six months only 21 willing participants were interviewed. A decision was made to move forward with the sample that included 12 success cases, five non-success cases and four parents with a total of 21 participants for this study.
Twelve success participants in the study graduated from high school and moved on to postsecondary education at a two-year community college or a four-year college. Two of them have graduated this past year, and the others are on track to graduate in a few years. Five non-success participants, left school at different grades and currently work at part-time or full-time jobs. The third group of participants included four Latino parents who provided a personal outlook on success and non-success for their children. Parents were included in the study taking in consideration the strong cultural role that parents play among Latinos families as they contribute to the development of their children as described in Chapter II.

The population for this study was generated from historical data of Latino students who were enrolled as seniors in KPS from 2002 to 2010. The list was requested from the school district via Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) form. The original list included 738 participants identified as Latinos with the Home Language Survey (HLS), the official identification form that each new student in the district completes when he/she officially enters the district. These potential participants were divided into two groups, (1) students who graduated from high school and proceeded with postsecondary education, and (2) students who did not finish and dropped out of high school. Table 3 contains a description of participants illustrating their diversity adding enticing data and information for future studies. Names of participants were coded in order to protect their identity.

The purposeful sample was well suited to allow for “lived experiences” and provide important qualitative data to be used for this type of study (Waters, 2010). The
information provided helped the researcher understand the problem and gather extensive information to address the research questions (Creswell, 2003).

Table 3

Success Case Method Demographics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Country of Origen</th>
<th>Years of Education</th>
<th>Graduated from H.S.</th>
<th>Kalamazoo Promise</th>
<th>College Attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Amy</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>WMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Blanca</td>
<td>México</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>KVCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Bryan</td>
<td>México</td>
<td>3-12</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>WMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 José</td>
<td>México</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>WMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Juan</td>
<td>México</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>WMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Maria</td>
<td>México</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>WMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Raúl</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>WMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Sarah</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>NAVY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Celeste</td>
<td>México</td>
<td>3-12</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>WMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Marisa</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>WMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Ana</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>WMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Víctor</td>
<td>México</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 César</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>KVCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Samuel</td>
<td>México</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Noemi</td>
<td>México</td>
<td>5-12</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Juan</td>
<td>México</td>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Gloria</td>
<td>México</td>
<td>8-11</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Perla</td>
<td>México</td>
<td>K-10</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Patricia</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>K-9</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Ilda</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>K-15</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Marta</td>
<td>México</td>
<td>K-11</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Risk, Protection and Confidentiality

One of the main risks associated with this type of study is the possibility that not enough participants can be identified. However, after an explanation of the underlying
principles, participants in this study were eager to be involved in a project that could benefit their Latino peers. Participants also offered to visit the schools to talk to students about their experiences, hoping that a personal testimony would entice positive changes among other Latino students. Nevertheless, to protect the identity of study participants, fictitious names were assigned to participants, and no reference was given to their particular school of attendance. Every attempt was made to maintain confidentiality, including an offer to hold the interviews in the public library or other locations. All participants indicated that they preferred that the interviews be held at their home. According to them, this setting allowed them to be more relaxed and free of other distractions. Some participants may have felt embarrassed about not finishing school but felt a sense of empowerment to think that their experiences and lack of success could help other Latinos to succeed. The researcher initiated each interview with casual conversation and attempted to create as comfortable an environment as possible. A consent form was used to obtain agreement from participants. The consent agreement was translated into Spanish, offering participants an opportunity to read the document in their dominant language to ensure full understanding of their role in this study as well as the provisions guaranteeing their privacy. A copy of this document is presented in Appendix A and a copy of the HSIRB is included in Appendix C.

Instrumentation

In this study, a phenomenological research approach was used to explore individual experiences based on personal knowledge and subjectivity with emphasis given to the importance of personal perception and interpretations to gain insights into
people’s motivations and actions (Lester, 1999). The structured interview was intended to capture the rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings (Kensit, 2000) to draw similar distinctions with the research questions. Open-ended interviews were conducted using a general interview approach for all participants (Patton, 2002). This approach involved outlining a specific questionnaire developed prior to the interview, which included seven underlying areas: (1) Describing school experience, (2) Contributing protective factors, (3) Contributing risk factors, (4) Personal factors, (5) Family factors, (6) School factors, and (7) The Kalamazoo Promise. The questioning allowed for free conversation within a topic area while ensuring all areas were adequately covered in the interview process. The Interview Protocol was designed to keep a record of the interviewee, date and location and also included short explanations of the terms: “success or non-success,” “Protective Factors,” and “Risk Factors.” A detailed list of the questions is included in Appendix B.

Interview Procedures

Phenomenological methods are particularly effective because they provide an opportunity to analyze experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives (Heidegger & Dahlstrom, 2005). Phenomenons are identified by the gathering of “deep” information and perceptions through an inductive, qualitative method such as interviews, discussion and observation from the perspective of the participant (Finlay, 2008). In this research, in-depth interviews were used to allow the interviewer to capture the perspectives of participants. Interviews began with social conversation creating a relaxed and trusting atmosphere. It was the responsibility of the interviewer to
create a comfortable climate to allow the participant to respond honestly and comprehensively (Leady & Ormond, 2005). Participants preferred the interviews to take place at their home where they indicated interviews would be more comfortable, quiet, and with minimum distractions or interruptions. Interviewing all participants at their home enhanced reliability to the study and reduced the degree of inconvenience for participants.

The interviewer encouraged free and open responses to describe perceptions from the participants. It was a dialogue between interviewer and interviewee to elicit rich, detailed material that was used in the analysis (Patton, 2008). To create a comfortable atmosphere to participants, opportunity was given to select a location and time for the interview.

The interviews were scheduled based on availability of the participants. Most of the interviews took place during the weekends and had to be accommodated with sensitivity to minimize interfering with regular family activities (grocery shopping, cleaning, laundry, church or meals). Each interview was audio taped, and the researcher took notes at every session. Permission to tape the interview was obtained from participants prior to agreeing to take part in the study. Interviews lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, without counting the time used to read and sign the protocol. No follow-up interviews were required.

Data Analysis and Verification

When conducting phenomenological data analysis, researchers use data reduction methods as analytical tools to draw meaningful summaries of the data provided
(Ploubibis & Goodman 2004). The interviews were structured according to the seven themes described in the interview protocol (Refer to Appendix C). They were audio recorded and then methodically transcribed (four interviews were conducted in Spanish and translated simultaneously to English) in preparation for the analysis. In order to prepare for the analysis, data need to be inspected, cleaned, coded and transformed with the goal of highlighting useful information (Ader, Mellenbergh & Hand, 2008). The next step of the data analysis included locating and interpreting key phrases, highlighting and sorting what the subjects disclosed. The information generated from the transcripts was then sorted into six themes and from the extensive responses of participants 59 subthemes were constructed. Further analysis revealed how often these subthemes reoccurred during the interviews. The next step included drafting tentative statements about the phenomenon according to the list of themes and subthemes as described in Table 4.

The researcher studied the transcripts looking for the textual portions of each theme and subtheme; the portions were sorted according to relevance, irrelevance, repetitiveness, and overlapping data; and a decision was made to keep or discard it. Consideration was given to the frequency of corresponding statements and any noteworthy response. The collected data helped to create structural descriptions for each theme that were then integrated in composite texts.
Table 4

Themes and Sub-themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SE – School Experience</th>
<th>PF – Protective Factors</th>
<th>RF - Risk Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE1. Years of schooling</td>
<td>PF1. Personal life motivation</td>
<td>RF1. Personal life issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE2. Likes about school</td>
<td>PF2. Support from family</td>
<td>RF2. Family issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE4. Ranking importance of school (1-10)</td>
<td>PF4. Motivation as a factor</td>
<td>RF4. Ranking of education’s importance (1-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE5. Graduation confidence</td>
<td>PF5. Personal ability as a factor</td>
<td>RF5. Importance of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE6. Difficulty of school</td>
<td>PF6. Income/money as a factor</td>
<td>RF6. Graduation/college a goal while in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE8. Ranking graduation as a goal (1-10)</td>
<td>PF8. Influence of role models as a factor</td>
<td>RF8. Motivation as a factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PF9. Students speaking only Spanish</td>
<td>RF9. Personal ability as a factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PF10. Segregation in cafeteria or hallways an activities</td>
<td>RF10. Income/money as a factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PF11. Feeling discriminated by other students, teachers, staff or programs</td>
<td>RF11. Influence of friends as a factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PF12. Recommendations to other Latinos</td>
<td>RF12. Influence of role models as a factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF – Family Factors</td>
<td>SF – School Factors</td>
<td>KP – The Kalamazoo Promise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF1. Importance of education in the family</td>
<td>SF1. Teachers’ high expectations</td>
<td>KP1. Ranking importance of a College degree (1-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF2. Family member graduated from high school</td>
<td>SF2. Help from counselors</td>
<td>KP2. Knowledge of the Promise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF3. Family member graduated from college</td>
<td>SF3. Curriculum as a factor</td>
<td>KP3. Knowledge of parents about the Promise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF4. Graduating from HS/College an expectation</td>
<td>SF4. Participation in extracurricular activities</td>
<td>KP4. Source of information regarding the Promise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF5. Parents role to ensure success</td>
<td>SF5. Took advantage of tutorial services</td>
<td>KP5. Personal benefit of the Promise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SF6. Role of bilingual program</td>
<td>KP6. Paying for school without the Promise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SF7. Role of bilingual club</td>
<td>KP7. Outcome if not a graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SF8. Recommendations to improve the bilingual program</td>
<td>KP8. If graduated: How prepared for college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SF9. Recommendations to the schools</td>
<td>KP9. Ranking preparation for college (1-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>KP10. Ranking the services from the bilingual program (1-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>KP11. Who deserves credit for success?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>KP12. Who to blame for non-success?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to address the four research questions: (1) Investigate protective and risk factors as identified by successful Latino students, non-successful Latino students, and parents (2) look into new or previously undocumented risk factors related to Latinos, (3) examine the role of the Kalamazoo Promise as a motivator of success for Latinos, and (4) explore the use of SCM as a viable evaluation study method to be applied in the field of education.

The designed method of this study was crafted based on Brinkerhoff’s (2003) Success Case Method (SCM): First, defining what was considered “success,” designing and implementing a survey to research for best and worst cases, and third, interviewing, documenting and analyzing the open-ended interviews of Latino students and parents.

A general inductive methodological approach for qualitative data analysis (Thomas, 2003) was used. The steps included: (1) transcribing the audio interviews (and translating four from Spanish to English), (2) organizing the raw data by themes and issues in each section into short statements to be included in Excel charts, and (3) arranging findings according to themes and topics. This process revealed the issues being discussed by participants (interpretation and conjecture) and allowed the researcher to determine implications and recommendations for further research. The analysis conducted allowed the researcher to seek out meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of the research participants (Patton, 2002). This phenomenological method
provided a logical, systematic, and coherent resource making it possible to arrive at essential descriptions of the participants’ dynamic experiences (Finlay, 2008).

Data analysis was accomplished by first sorting what the three groups (successful students, non-successful students, and parents) stated to be protective factors contributing to the success of Latino students. Second, analysis was also conducted on what these three groups considered to be risk factors contributing to the non-success of Latino students. All participants had the opportunity to express their experience and perception addressed in the five themes as formatted in the questionnaire: (1) personal motivation, (2) role of parents/family support, (3) role of the schools, (4) role of friends and others, and (5) the Kalamazoo Promise.

Maximizing Protective Factors

**Question 1(a)**

The following sections answer part (a) of question one: How do successful students, non-successful students, and parents maximize protective factors to create an environment for their academic success?

**Successful Students**

According to the successful participants, personal motivation, the role of parents/family, the role of the school, the role of friends and others, and the Kalamazoo Promise were the factors that contributed to maximizing protective factors.
**Personal Motivation.** The responses from successful participants indicated that motivated students tend to be more enthusiastic about school, usually do well, and strive to go beyond just earning a high school diploma. Motivation is the reason for an action and what gave them purpose and direction with their behavior. The more academic motivation students have, the more likely they are to succeed in school (Anderson & Keith, 1997; Wentzel, 1988). When asked what contributed to their success, 100% of successful participants indicated that personal motivation was the principal factor for their success. This topic was also interjected within other responses and focused on the participants’ level of motivation; they wanted to better themselves, wanted to avoid living in poverty; they had the resolve to succeed and, at the same time, had the desire to meet family expectations.

Two participants indicated that seeing their parents earning low wages in spite of their hard work to support the family contributed to their personal motivation. They expressed confidence in the ability to do better by making education a priority in their life in order to seek a better future.

One participant, in spite of acknowledging personal limitations and struggling academically at school, indicated that her academic success was the result of her own motivation. According to this participant, motivation was the force enticing her to go to school every day, to pay attention in class, and to do her work. (Good grades and compliments from teachers provided personal satisfaction.)

Other participants indicated that personal motivation gave them self-confidence to succeed in school. Their self-motivation was triggered by seeing peers who did not graduate from school and their struggle to find jobs. According to two participants, it is
all about personal motivation and the desire to succeed. As a proud Latino, one participant indicated that he did not want to be a negative national statistic.

Personal motivation was also the factor one participant revealed, indicating that her personal goal was to complete high school, move away from home and try different experiences by traveling the world. She did it by enlisting in the Armed Forces where she has been deployed to several countries.

**Role of Parents/Family Support.** The role of parents in the success of their children was ranked as a very important factor by 90% of successful participants in this study. Regardless of ethnicity, educational background or legal status of the families, this factor was mentioned several times throughout the interviews.

Three participants gave credit to their parents for their persistence, advice, and confidence in their ability to do well in school. It was an expectation of the parents that the children would complete high school and go to college, and this expectation was constantly reaffirmed to them. Parents were credited to be the custodians of family traditions along with their Catholic/Christian upbringing where religious values and expectations were conveyed to their children. One participant indicated that dropping out of school would not be accepted by her parents and that their firmness had contributed to what she has achieved so far.

**Role of the Schools.** About two-thirds of successful participants indicated the schools played a role in their personal success. Questions were framed in such a way as to gather data related to likes and dislikes related to school, interaction with students and teachers, rigor of classes, involvement in extracurricular activities, how well the schools
prepared them and the role of the Kalamazoo Promise. (Refer to Themes and Sub-themes in Table 4.)

According to 90% of successful participants, the school was primarily a place to socialize and meet friends. The school was the place where social life took place, to be with friends in the hallways, cafeteria and, in some cases in the classroom. However, about 30% of successful participants indicated their reason to go to school was to learn. “I enjoyed being around other students of my age, seeing them every day and having the opportunity to learn” was expressed by a recent high school graduate. Referring to the support received from the school, another participant valued the education received and praised the teaching staff for their services and advice. Participant Ana considered it a privilege to be part of a cadre in the Dual Language Immersion Program at a local school where she started as a kindergartener in 1999. This participant attributed part of her success to this specialized program that, as she indicated: “the immersion program included an excellent curriculum, we had dedicated teachers who provided us comprehensive education and personal guidance.” In fact, 60% of the successful participants indicated that the teachers and staff of the bilingual program played an important role helping them to acquire English proficiency and helping them to adjust to the new school setting.

Teachers and administrators received mixed responses from 50% of successful participants. According to students, most teachers were perceived as well prepared, caring and supportive of students. Participants indicated that teachers’ example had a positive influence on them.
Two participants, one who arrived to the school district during 7th grade and another as a 9th grader, both remember frightening experiences as newcomers in the school setting. They recalled how attending classes at first was a shocking experience particularly by not being able to understand or communicate with teachers and peers because they did not speak English. These participants were grateful to the schools.

About 50% of successful participants who began their schooling in the district at the elementary level stated the importance of K-6 grades as a fundamental stage for listening, speaking, reading and writing in the process of acquiring proficiency in English. Six of the successful participants who entered school at the middle or high school level indicated how important and helpful was for them taking English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. According to these participants, the bilingual courses were instrumental in learning English and other academic skills they needed to succeed in school.

Role of Friends and Others. The role of friends or other adults as a protective factor to the success of Latinos had an interesting twist in this study. About 70% of successful participants indicated having relatives who were successful at school and observing other successful Latinos as role models were an inspiration to their desire to succeed. These participants indicated having older siblings, relatives or friends in school or who had graduated and had influenced and/or “pushed” them to do well in school. Three participants who were the oldest child in their family believed they had an “obligation” to set a good example for their younger siblings but also felt obligated to fulfill the wishes and aspirations of the parents.
On the other hand, about 60% expressed seeing other peers not taking advantage of the educational opportunities in school motivated them to strive for success. Successful participants appeared to be able to prevail over not being influenced by distracting or harmful peer pressure. According to one participant, seeing peers who did not graduate prompted them to want to do well in school. This participant stated seeing former peers struggling financially and with a bleak future ahead. One participant had advice for students who use their lack of legal immigration status as a reason for not doing well in school, “It is better to be an illegal with education than one without education.” At the end this participant indicated that an individual with a school degree has a better chance to succeed.

One participant, a junior in college, expressed how important the selection of school friends was. “The type of support students get from friends is important” this participant indicated. Participants indicated that being around “good students” compelled them to do as well as their friends; otherwise, individuals felt out of place. Three participants cherished their relationship with a group of friends that started at the elementary level and that lasted all the way to high school. The camaraderie helped them to be active in school events such as school plays, going together to school games and visiting each other’s homes. One participant stated this type of group support had an influence prompting them all the way to college.” This participant added a sample of the type of support provided in her inner circle: “You can have study groups with your friends to explain something from your class when there was something you did not understand.” “This support system is important, but if you hang around with poor
(academically) students, students in trouble, sooner or later you also end up doing the same activities that your friends do,” this participant commented.

About 90% of successful participants indicated that socialization was a key factor in their school life. Participants were divided 50/50 about having only other Latinos as friends and spending time together. According to success participants, congregating as a group in the cafeteria, hallways or other school events gave them a sense of unity, ethnic pride, an opportunity to speak in their native language, and provided a sense of comfort particularly to newcomers.

**Role of The Kalamazoo Promise.** When all participants were asked if the Kalamazoo Promise had influenced their success, all successful participants articulated in their own way with words of joy, relief, and gratitude for this “special gift” as one participant expressed. One parent voiced not having enough words to thank the donors and challenged Latino students with these words: “There is no excuse for a Latino in this community, including ‘undocumented’ of dreaming to go to college.” “My parents didn’t have the money to send me to college,” one participant said, but now, I don’t have to worry about my tuition, I live at home with my parents and we manage to find ways to pay for my books,” this participant concluded.

**Non-successful Students**

Responses from non-successful participants to the question regarding if there were some protective factors which they believe could have contribute to creating an environment for academic success were similar to the responses from the successful participants. Their responses were as follows:
Personal Motivation. Non-successful students also voiced that personal motivation has to be the reason for an action and what would have given them purpose and direction regarding their behavior, but this motivation was not in their hearts. Each one of them at different places during the interview expressed disappointment and regretted not having the determination ("ganas") he needed to change while they were in school. One participant indicated that at the end, it was his own fault. According to this participant, there were opportunities and other factors that could have giving him the "push" he needed to succeed, but by not taking schooling seriously he was easily distracted and uninterested.

Role of Parents/Family Support. Non-successful participants acknowledged parents play an important role providing support and encouragement to children to ensure they do well in school. These participants indicated that when their parents decided to come to this country, their primary objective was to strive to improve the family financially. By bringing them and their siblings to the U.S., they also wanted their children to take advantage of the educational opportunities available. “Good intentions are fine,” one of the participants said, “but when parents are busy and coming home late, we just did whatever we wanted.” “My parents did not know how to help me with my school work,” one participant said. “Not knowing how to do my homework, already at the elementary level, I did not turn in homework and consequently I was always behind and getting bad grades,” this participant concluded.

Looking back, one participant expressed, “my parents began losing control of me by the time I was in middle school.” This participant expressed feeling bad, and wished
they could be more strict and assertive with him. “I could have graduated from high school and probably finished college. I feel sad about myself and jealous about other parents who managed to keep their children focused about school and now they have succeeded” one of the participants said.

**Role of the Schools.** Responses from non-successful participants provided data related to likes and dislikes at school, interaction with students and teachers, rigor of classes, involvement in extracurricular activities, how well the schools prepared them and the role of the Kalamazoo Promise (Refer to Themes and Sub-themes – Table 4). Non-successful students provided similar responses as successful participants did regarding the school being the focal point for their socialization. These participants were also grateful and felt admiration for most teachers; however, they indicated some teachers were not prepared to deal with limited English proficiency students. They felt “not included” in a classroom where the teacher assumed they all spoke English. One participant indicated that sometimes he felt “lost” in the class and when this happened, he did whatever was possible to “get out” of the class. This participant indicated that “someone could have done something to help students like me.” Contrary to 50% of the success participants indicating that school was not hard or not easy, unsuccessful participants expressed school was hard for them.

Non-success participants were very vocal about how important it was to speak Spanish with their friends at the school. They indicated, speaking Spanish provided them some camaraderie and cultural commonality, but also realized that by speaking only in Spanish they lost opportunities to acquire proficiency in English.
This group of participants had hard words for the administration and felt administrators at the schools and central office has neglected promoting proactive initiatives targeting Latinos. One participant stated, “services to Latinos at the schools are just a token in comparison to services provided to other ethnic groups at the district.” “I feel they include us only when it is a convenience for the district,” was harshly voiced by another participant.

**Role of Friends and Others.** According to non-successful participants, friendship (“la amistad”) provides a strong bond. These participants indicated that “if they would not have had other Latinos as friends, they would not be able to communicate with anyone at the school, primarily when they were new and were not able to speak English. “This is why we tried to sit together on the bus, in classes, or in the cafeteria and we ‘hanged out’ in the hallways,” one of the participants expressed. “I wish, I would have been stronger,” one participant said. “I could have said no when planning skipping classes or our school escapades to drive around the city or spending the day at the mall or at a friend’s home.”

**Role of the Kalamazoo Promise.** Non-successful participants expressed not comprehending the full extent and benefits of the Kalamazoo Promise. These participants accepted full responsibility for not taking advantage of the opportunity provided by the Promise, but they felt it was a too far away incentive considering that they already came to school with deficiencies (“muy atrasados”). “We probably needed someone working closely with us to keep the idea of the promise ‘alive’ because at home, I don’t think my
parents really understood nor provided me with the proper support,” one participant expressed.

Parents

The role of parents in this study was especially important because the Latino culture is traditionally family oriented. When parents were asked what factors were contributing to creating an environment for academic success of young Latinos, responses were surprisingly quite similar to the responses from student participants. During the analysis, personal motivation, the role of parents/family, the role of the school, the role of friends and others, and the Kalamazoo Promise were the factors according to successful participants creating an environment for their success. The following sections according to parents are the factors to be maximized to create an environment of success:

Personal Motivation. Academic motivation according to parents is influenced by the closeness of the relationships with their children. The more academic motivation parents are able to foster and reaffirm to their children, the more likely they are to succeed in school, according to these parents. Parents voiced that this support needed to come from both parents to ensure that youngsters are not getting conflicting messages.

Role of Parents/Family Support. Parents were hard on themselves because they considered the success of Latino children to rest primarily on them. One parent said, “We bring them to this world, we are responsible to care for them until they are adults.” “Parents’ expectations are important for the success of their children,” one parent
indicated. Three successful participants indicated for example how their parents changed education expectations for their children from at first being satisfied with only a high school diploma to a new expectation and confidence that their youngsters could graduate from college. To nurture these expectations, 70% of the success participants credited their mother as the one conveying interest in what students did at school, she checked daily homework, she attended school functions, and she maintained communication with teachers. Two participants indicated that at home to support these expectations, their parents established a routine requiring them to sit around the dinner table to do school work every day.

Of the four parents interviewed, two had only elementary education, one had attended high school, and one had some college education, but they all indicated the importance of attending parent/teacher conferences. One parent indicated how difficult was to attend conferences during the months when they had to work at the greenhouses sometimes until 7:00 p.m. “I wanted to hear directly from the teacher how my children were doing,” one parent indicated. One participant indicated that going to conferences was a “family affair.” “We all had to go, and because we are a large family, we had to visit several teachers the same night.” Fifty percent of successful participants indicated that in most cases, the mother was the one who attended conferences because their fathers had to work at night.

Role of the Schools. One of the parents expressed the importance to take advantage of the educational opportunities available for their children by attending the schools in this country. “I get upset with some of our parents,” one participant said. “Parents think they still are in their country or a village where the only role of parents
regarding school was to ensure they went to school.” Some parents expressed not having time to attend school functions or fathers who leave to the mother all issues related to the school. Ilda, a parent of a recent college graduate said: “I have managed to motivate my children to study and obtain good grades. I have monitored their performance in school, demanded and expected at every grade that they do their best. Those were my expectations because in our home we value education and because I knew the strength and academic potential of my children.” This participant went further providing samples of her own strategies: “I checked every day their school assignments and at home I provided a place to do school work. The next day I verified (contacting teachers) if homework was submitted to the teacher, in addition I routinely checked returned papers, quizzes and tests. We went over the comments from teachers on their papers. I value education, and I believe that education plays an important role in order to succeed. Education can bring opportunities to my children to become successful professionals and productive citizens in this country.”

Role of Friends and Others. Parents had mixed feelings regarding the role of friends and others in the success of Latinos. Parents agreed in placing a degree of responsibility in older siblings to become an example to the younger ones. They took pride to talk about brothers and sisters, or other extended family members who were successful. “I want my children to be like my uncle Antonio or better,” one participant said. One parent expressed dismay at some parents who have no idea of who the friends of their children are. Two parents indicated the importance of getting to know both the friends of the children as well as the parents. “I let my children go to their friends’ home” one parent indicated, “but I also encourage my children to invite them to come to our
“Getting to know and talk to their friends and their parents help us to know what is going on with the children,” this parent added. “I want my children to have fun with their friends,” one parent said, “but I don’t want unpleasant surprises, for this reason, I trust my children, I get to know their friends, but I am also alert.”

Role of the Kalamazoo Promise. One parent said that the day when her daughter returned home from school and told her the wonderful news of the Promise both cried with joy at such wonderful opportunity. “We did not have the resources to finance college for our daughter, but thanks to the Promise, now she is ready to graduate from college” this parent indicated. One parent gratefully voiced, “This is what makes this country so unique. There are opportunities to succeed, and what happened in this community with the Promise, it is something quite remarkable.” Parents expressed how important was to ensure their children took advantage of this scholarship program and have better job opportunities and not having to work in low paying jobs like the ones they had to do.

Minimizing Risk Factors

Question 1(b)

The following sections answer part (b) of question one, “What do successful students, non-successful students, and parents perceive as risk factors that provide barriers to creating an environment for their academic success?
Successful Students

Successful students were asked if there were reasons they could have attributed to becoming disenchanted about school and that could have led to their non-success. These participants expressed that potentially their non-success could have taken place due to: (a) their lack of motivation, (b) if they did not have adequate support from their parents, (c) due to the ineffective role of the school, and (d) because of the negative influence of friends and lack of role models in their life. According to successful participants the Kalamazoo Promise was a great gift and 10 of them benefited from this scholarship program. These participants voiced the importance of doing something to ensure Latinos receive this scholarship and go to college. “It is sad to see many of us not taking advantage of this opportunity,” according to one participant. Even so, these participants did not consider the Promise a risk factor, they expressed the scholarship was not a robust incentive to surpass other risk factors. The description of these factors and how they were able to minimize them are described as follows:

Personal Motivation. The analysis of the responses showed that 95% of successful participants attributed to the lack of motivation as the primary reason for not succeeding in school. They expressed that it was hard to overcome personal difficulties either at home or at the school if personal motivation was not in their hearts. These participants recognized that the “spark” to ignite self-motivation has to come from their own desire to succeed. Participants also expressed that when they had difficult issues either at school, or with teachers and peers, they had to reaffirm themselves the desire to
succeed. According to them, to help with this reaffirmation it was important having some type of support system to keep that “flame” alive to propel their aspirations.

Role of Parents/Family Support. During the interviews, when asked about risk factors or asked for recommendations to avoid them, 70% of successful participants indicated that Latino parents contribute to the risk factors students encounter. A frequent response from 80% of the successful participants, credited the mother to be the educational motivator and enforcer. About 40% of all participants indicated that their parents had only an elementary education or none, but regardless of the level of education, the lack of strong parental support played an important role in their success or non-success. Three of the participants indicated parents often say they value education, but fall short of demonstrating it because they are too busy or don’t know how. “They just need to look around and see the difference among educated people and those without it,” stated one of the participants. These participants believed their parents were so concerned about their work or worried about earning money to pay their bills that little or no attention was given to their children. In addition, 50% of all participants indicated that some parents expect their children to work and help with the financial expenses at home. According to one participant, some parents realize that if their children have more education, this will eventually benefit the family, but that does not solve their immediate needs.

According to the Pew Hispanic Center (2002), among Latino families struggling financially it is a common occurrence that especially boys leave school to find jobs to help with the family budget. In recent years, this phenomenon has also been observed among Latino girls (Pew Hispanic Center, 2002). To these participants, good parenting
goes beyond providing basic needs and argued that their conditions in this country has pushed Latino parents to ignore other basic needs of their children.

Participants stated that part of the problem is that parents don’t know how to help their children when it comes to school related responsibilities. According to these participants, most parents don’t spend time with their children or show interest in what they do at school. “I don’t recall my parents reading books to me (either in Spanish or English) when I was a child,” one of the participants expressed. About two thirds of all participants expressed the importance of parental awareness regarding what their children do in school and outside school.

One participant indicated parents need to trust their children but they needed to be observant and aware of their children’s acquaintances. These participants indicated there are many students skipping classes or the entire day, and questioned if parents are oblivious or if they didn’t care. “Parents need to be watchful of their children and encourage participation in after school activities beginning at the elementary,” a participant indicated.

According to 70% of participants, they did not participate in extracurricular activities because of the cost and lack of transportation. Their parents could not pick them up after the activity because they had to work until late hours of the day. In addition, parents usually required older children to return home as soon as the school is over to take care of younger siblings. As a result of this, Latino students could not participate in after school activities (clubs, sports), or benefit from the after-school tutoring services. By not having Latino parents with the means or the interest to provide participation in
these extracurricular activities, participants expressed they were in disadvantage in comparison with other students in the school.

About 50% of participants indicated that family finances were critical issues having an effect in pursuing success. One participant expressed that finances has been an important issue with her family due to her parents having only temporary cleaning jobs that had caused hardship to them. Many times she and her brothers had to go and help their parents to finish early so that they did not have to be working all night. This participant also indicated that they had limited choices when it comes to looking for jobs because they don’t have a ‘green card” (Legal Immigration Status) and a Social Security number.

Due to the current economic situation in the country many Latino families have experienced extreme hardship. The looming possibility of parents, and eventually the children, being deported has created a frightening feeling, this participant expressed. According to a participant, an uncle was detained by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) while doing cleaning work at a local department store. He was deported, leaving the mother with the economic burden of raising now a dismembered family where the children suffered the most. Unless undocumented parents resolve their legal status in this country, the uncertainty of being deported looms among young Latinos restricting them with the possibility of success.

Four participants expressed they believe poverty was a strong factor for the lack of success of many Latinos but also said poverty cannot be blamed all the time. One of these participants indicated he knew two poor families (one working in seasonal agricultural jobs and the other on a poultry farm) with three children and they are now
professionals. According to this participant, this was possible due to the constant support and high expectations from their parents.

**Role of the Schools.** About 90% of all student participants had favorable opinions of the schools primarily as a socializing medium and by extension a learning place. However, 20% placed a degree of responsibility on school officials for the lack of success of Latino students. Comments ranged from lack of support to meet their academic needs to inadvertently paying no attention to some behavioral issues.

Several participants questioned the district for not taking a stronger and more proactive approach to reduce the number of unsuccessful Latinos. They articulated: “School officials need to take a closer look to the number of Latinos entering the district in elementary and the exponential decrease in their numbers by the twelfth grade.” When analyzing data from participants, three distinguished groups, emerged: (1) participants taking school seriously and wanting to graduate, (2) participants who started not doing well the first two years and at the end changing and making schooling a priority, and (3) participants who started doing well, but gradually changed, lost interest and did not graduate.

An interesting factor from this study was the opinion participants expressed about school administrators. About 70% of them perceived a disconnect between administrators and Latino students, indicating during high school not having a personal conversation with the principal or assistant principals (with the exception of referrals to the office due to discipline issues) and having only indirect contact with them at school assemblies. Participants strongly voiced the inconsistency and laxness with the enforcement of attendance and discipline code. Participants mused over their escapades hiding from
“security” while skipping classes, leaving school part of the day and returning to school to take the bus home at the end of the school day with little or no consequences from the administration. Several participants were unsympathetic with school administrators (including central administration) for the lack of action addressing discipline at the district level and gang activity in the schools. Participants believe the administration has ignored the seriousness of students involved in recruitment, initiation, rivalry among gang factions, and the sale and consumption of illegal drugs by gang members and independent drug entrepreneurs. Participants voiced gang activity takes place at the bus stop, school parking lots, hallways, bathrooms and in the cafeteria. Participants indicated the importance of establishing proactive and creative solutions with consistency and fairness in the enforcement of the student code of conduct, how to prevent truancy and exploring reasons of students not wanting to be in class or at the school.

About 60% of participants had an unfavorable perception of the role of counselors. Participants expressed they were neither informed nor challenged to take advanced courses. Two participants indicated they managed to navigate course requirements without taking rigorous courses allowing them to maintain an acceptable grade point average GPA. One participant indicated counselors selected his classes, and during his four years in high school, no one recommended enrolling in AP courses or courses intended to prepare him for a particular major in college. Consequently, these participants expressed that they were ill prepared the first year in college.

Several participants voiced the importance of school to improve race relation among students to reduce some of the incidents among different groups. They realized people feel more comfortable with their “own” racial or ethnic group, but indicated when
Latino students isolate themselves and do not relate or interact with English speaking students, they miss the opportunity to make more friends. Participants were divided 50/50 with Spanish being the main language of communication among peers in the school. While recognizing that the language provided some type of amalgamation among them, they recognized speaking only in Spanish at the school limited or delayed their opportunity to become more proficient in English.

Participants stated that Latino students are usually isolated or excluded from sports and extracurricular activities (exception given to the Bilingual Club). Several participants indicated not being able to participate due to limited resources or because of childcare responsibilities until their parents arrived home from work. In addition, participants indicated some parents were hesitant about allowing their youngsters to stay after school or they didn’t have any means of transportation back home if they missed the bus. When it comes to sports, they recognized players with the best skills are chosen, and Latinos didn’t have much chance. Girls, especially, didn’t have previous experience in competitive sports. Boys’ participation is also limited, with soccer being the exception where some of them might have had a lead.

Several participants (40%) indicated that some of their problems at school had to do with the feeling of being discriminated against, not by the teachers but by other students. This type of discrimination comes from comments on the bus, in the hallways, in the cafeteria, and sometimes in the classroom. “It is hard to ignore,” two participants stated, when students for whatever reason make a racial slur such as calling them “dirty Mexicans” while walking in front of a group of students in the school corridor or if they were seated together in the cafeteria. “Resentment builds up, and eventually fights erupt
leading to school suspensions” according to one participant. Some participants expressed that discrimination sometimes does not come from direct racial or demeaning comments, but how the system ignores their needs. “Our presence is almost unnoticeable in the schools. Just look who is or who is not included in the sports, band, choir, and school plays just to name a few,” according to three participants. Participants recognize to some extent they are to blame because they contributed to their isolation, but questioned the administration’s effort to ensure representation and diversity. Two participants noticed that about 10% percent of the student population in this district was Latino, but they were not proportionally represented among teachers, counselors and administrators. “The numbers don’t reflect a fair representation of Latinos that could easily be some of our role models,” according to these participants.

About 80% of participants expressed gratitude and admiration for the teaching staff. However, several participants made the observation that in their perception, teachers need to be trained with ESL strategies and other methodologies to ensure the inclusion of students in their classes. They believe a great number of their teachers made the assumption that everyone in their class is fluent in English. Teachers need to be informed of the English proficiency level of their students, and use appropriate teaching strategies to make content comprehensible to all of them.

Role of Friends and Others. When successful participants were asked what factors they believe had an influence in the non-success of Latino students, about 90% of them blamed to the negative influence of friends. According to them, friendship is very important and becomes an important rite of passage from childhood to adolescence beginning in middle school all the way to high school. About 90% of participants
indicated friends attempted in several occasions to persuade them or other peers to skip certain classes or leave campus part of the day or spend the whole day in a friend’s home.

Participants were asked if they believed skipping classes or school was not appropriate, why no one said something to dissuade friends. One participant indicated that several times when the bell rang, he tried to encourage them to go to class, but his friends also tried to convince him to skip classes with them. This participant stated that on numerous occasions when he walked away, his friends mocked him, calling him names. They tried to humiliate him, calling him “chicken” and “mama’s boy.” This was hurtful, he indicated, because he also wanted to be accepted and to be with them.

About 80% of the participants indicated that sitting together in the cafeteria and conversing in Spanish was part of their daily ritual among Latino friends at the school. Participants have indicated that speaking Spanish with their friends was a natural social activity and an observable fact that helped them bond together; however, by only speaking in Spanish they isolated themselves from the rest of the student population and slowed down the opportunity to learn English. One participant referring to this issue stated, “I understand people hang around with friends; there is nothing wrong with this, but for us Latinos trying to learn English, it is better if we also socialize with English speaking students and learn the second language.” This participant voiced they already spoke Spanish, and by not speaking English he missed the opportunity to mix with other ethnic/racial groups.

Role of the Kalamazoo Promise. Success participants were very vocal expressing gratitude for “this incredible gift” and 10 of them vowed to take advantage of the scholarship to get a college degree. These participants also voiced disappointment seeing
only a small number of Latinos taking advantage of the Promise. In addition to the risk factors contributing to their lack of interest for school, these participants voiced that for unknown reasons Latinos were not reaching the goal of the Promise. These participants added that the whole concept of the Promise need to be infused to Latinos at the secondary school level and properly nurtured with recipients in college. Creative approaches will be required to help Latinos maximize the benefits of such “wonderful gift” in the words of one of the participants. Participants proposed having the Promise recipients taking special interest to meet regularly with students at the middle or high schools to stress the importance and implications of this scholarship.

Non-Successful Students

The following sections focus in the responses of non-success participants with reference to the five factors that Latino students need to minimize in order to create an environment for their academic success. During the analysis, it was evident that according to non-successful participants the reasons that contributed to their non-success included: (a) lack of personal motivation as a driving force to be interested in school, (b) not having at home the proper support of parents/family, (c) believing that adequate support was not available to them at the school, and (d) not having positive role models they could look up to, along with negative influence from friends. The Promise unfortunately did not have a significant impact on them. According to them, due to other distractions, this scholarship was not a strong incentive to compel them to change.

Personal Motivation. The five non-graduates in the study indicated the main reason for their non-success at school was the lack of motivation and not being able to
establish academic priorities. They recognized that no one else is to blame but themselves. In addition, they believed that the language barrier hindered their motivation because in order to succeed in school they had to work harder than other students, something they did not do.

They expressed personal disappointment, partially blamed to their immaturity, laziness, and the erroneous perception that education was not important for them. Now they realized there are no short cuts to success and the only path is hard work, and determination, both components they thought were missing during their days in school.

One participant, several times during the interview, indicated that during middle school and up to the end of her 10th grade, she was excited about the perspectives of graduating and going to college. This participant began losing her original excitement for school and she began having behavioral issues. Eventually became pregnant and dropped out of school at the end of the first semester of her senior year. When she was at school this participant indicated she believed finding work would be easy; now, she realizes that jobs are not easily available and particularly with no diploma or particular skills. Three participants indicated that not having a diploma has relegated them to minimum salary jobs, created financial hardship including if both, husband and wife are working they are having difficulty supporting a family and paying monthly bills.

One participant believed that due to his lack of motivation, he did minimum school work, just enough to navigate through high school. “I did not take any AP classes during my four years in high school, I did not care if I received ‘Cs’ or ‘Ds’ as long as I passed my classes, was fine with me” this participant voiced. This participant graduated
from high school, but went to college ill prepared. This lack of motivation for school and poor behavior persisted, and was eventually dismissed from college.

A recurring comment from four non-success participants was their lack of enthusiasm for school. Two non-success participants indicated not speaking English and having an accent prevented them from understanding the teacher and asking questions during class. These non-success participants acknowledged that the ESL classes could have helped them to acquire the second language but when they opted to skip school, or were suspended, they were also missing the instruction they needed to acquire the language. Consequently, these participants indicated, they did not do or turn in homework they began falling behind in class, and were unprepared for quizzes or exams. Receiving bad grades added frustration and eventually they fabricated excuses to miss certain classes and sometimes the whole day of school to be with friends with similar issues. When they look back, four of the non-success participants believed they had the ability to do the school work, but the motivation was not there. Now they regret their poor choices and wish this trend of non-success could be changed by advocating some type of comprehensive work from counselors and the presence of role models at the schools.

Two non-success participants, both entering school at the sixth grade, one completed high school at an alternative program and the other dropped out of school after three years in high school, earning only five credits. Both participants indicated that their lack of school motivation lead them to become involved in gang activity that eventually extended to the school and resulted in fights with other factions and other disciplinary issues leading to expulsion. One non-success participant expressed he was unable to
blend and adapt to the culture of this country. He indicated that he did not choose to be here; his parents brought him to this community. He missed friends and relatives in his native country and has experienced discrimination because he is not proficient in English and speaks with an accent.

Another factor having an impact on motivation, which was also articulated by 50% of all participants, has to do with their immigration status. About 40% of all participants indicated their parents and the students themselves do not have legal immigration status, and they believed that this fact automatically reduced their opportunity to succeed. They felt their fate has been determined, knowing there is no possibility of getting a residence card in the near future. “Why should I make an effort to succeed in school if no one will hire me because I don’t have a Social Security number?” one participant asked.

Role of Parents/Family Support. Non-successful participants were blunt by placing responsibility on their own lack of success, but they also indicated that Latino parents play a significant role in the non-success of their children. These participants expressed that there are two ways parents bear some responsibility, first, by not being strong enough to establish discipline at home and not knowing how to help their children with school work, and second, parents are too busy trying to meet the financial needs of the family and consequently neglecting with the upbringing of their children. A frequent response from 80% of all the cases, credited the mother with being the educational motivator and enforcer. One participant recollected how many times his mother tried by talking to him, providing advice and many times by punishing him, but at the end, he still made poor choices about school and eventually stopped going to school.
The four parents indicated that one problem with some Latino parents, especially uneducated ones is the belief that all educational responsibility relies on the school. “I send my children every day to school, they go there to learn” one parent said. “When they were little, I was able to help them, but now in some of their classes I don’t know how” this parent concluded. Other parents indicated that at the high school they had little or no contact with their child counselor. Parents expected counselors to meet more often with students to assist them not only with course selection, financial aid and scholarship opportunities, but also intervening and helping students with truancy and behavioral issues. “If they are counselors, why don’t they counsel the students to help solving some of the issues young people have” one parent stated.

**Role of the School.** Non-success participants placed a larger degree of responsibility to the schools primarily by not having proactive programs tailored to the needs of young Latinos. These participants voiced that several advocacy programs were available that focused on supporting African American students but there were none for Latinos. Competitive sports programs were another area that participants indicated Latinos were not represented at the schools. It was recommended that adults running these programs improve their efforts to “include more Brown faces” according to one participant. Additional comments from participants included the improvement of counseling services primarily at the high school level, and the importance of addressing student discipline along with a consistent application of the code of conduct.

**Role of Friends and Others.** Non-successful participants acknowledged that sometimes they were the ones who initiated plans to skip classes or the entire day of
school, but sometimes they were easily convinced by their peers and skipped due to peer pressure. They also admitted this was not a forceful persuasion but the desire to please friends was important because usually these were the only friends they had. “We usually were in the same situation, we were struggling in most of our classes, if we stayed in the school we would get in trouble with security or would get challenged by some of the African American students and would start a fight; these were some of our reasons to skip school” one participant said. “I know now I regret it” this participant added, “but we were having fun as long as we did not get caught and our parents did not know.” This group of non-success participants indicated that at first they had the intention to do their best at school, but as they progressed at school their interest for school gradually dwindled. At first, three non-successful participants indicated that missing one class or a day at school was not a great deal because they thought could make it up by turning in late work. According to these participants, they realized it was not easy. Soon they began falling behind in the rest of their classes, not understanding what was taught by the teacher, and by the end of the marking period they were receiving failing grades in most classes. Non-successful participants also acknowledged knowing that after six unexcused absences they would lose credit and if they already had six or more unexcused absences, there was no incentive to attend the class. According to these students, they began hiding in the bathrooms or wandering the hallways to avoid being caught by security. On numerous occasions they tried to play “hide and seek” with the hall security, one participant said, “We left campus, sometimes walking or with a friend with a car.” “It is disturbing how strong the influence of friends was when we were that young and
immature,” one participant indicated. According to these participants the desire to be accepted by friends was very important for them.

Two non-success participants who candidly admitted being involved in gang activities expressed their behavior and interaction with peers occasionally led to quarrels with students with different affiliations. One non-success participant indicated having racial tension with African American students at times when he and his friends crossed paths in the hallways or the cafeteria. Verbal confrontation led to fights, and consequently, along with his friends, he was suspended from school on several occasions. Several participants indicated gang activity at the schools is more serious than the administration wants to acknowledge. They added: “This is something quite big in the schools. Being affiliated is covert but there is some type of recruitment, initiation and activity that can be seen in the graffiti in the bathrooms, school textbooks, desks, and cafeteria tables. Allegiance is displayed by different groups with the type of clothing they wear, hand signals, and by walking in packs or group gatherings during change of classes, in the cafeteria or the school entrance. Some of their activities include the sale and distribution of marihuana as an easy way to earn money.”

Truancy seems to be a growing problem at the middle and high school levels. Regardless of the security safeguards and closed campus policy, students continued leaving school at their own discretion. Participants indicated that students make plans to meet in the parking lot at the arrival of buses in the morning or they walked to a friend’s car to leave campus and returned in the afternoon in time to take the bus home with no consequences from school administrators. When asked what they did during their school escapades, participants indicated they usually went to the mall or to a friend’s home to
watch TV and/or smoke marijuana. According to one participant, most of these friends had some disconnection with school, and some of them had problems at home. “They were fun people to be around, but they were not the role models that I needed to succeed at school.”

**Role of the Kalamazoo Promise.** When participants were asked if the Kalamazoo Promise had influenced their success or non-success, non-success participants expressed words of regret and personal disappointment. According to them, high school graduation or college degrees were goals that were too far away. One non-success participant said, “How could I think about graduation when it was my third year in high school and I had only six credits?” “The Promise was a great opportunity,” this participant said, “I truly regret it, but it’s nothing I can do now. I wish I can go back and change things…but it is too late for me. I hope I can do something to prevent other Latinos from doing what I did.”

**Parents**

Because parents—and by extension the family—and the role they play in the upbringing of young Latinos are fundamental components of Latino culture, significant consideration was given to their observations. The researcher was overwhelmed by the candid remarks of parents about themselves and the importance of Latino parents to improve parenting skills. The following are some comments drawn when addressing the risk factors troubling the success of young Latinos.
Personal Motivation. One parent said: “I will give you an example. If I have a small plant at home and I don’t water and take good care of that plant, how do I expect that the plant will grow and produce flowers?” “The same happens with our children,” this parent indicated, “if we don’t provide the proper environment at home, first with our example, and by encouraging our children to do their best, how do we expect these children to be motivated and have high aspirations? If we don’t do this, or don’t know how, we will pay later the consequences.” Other parents indicated that when children are interested in something, instead of ignoring them, parents need to show interest and give them proper attention. Parents believe neglecting these small details minimize communication with their children and this phenomenon appeared to get worse as children got older.

Role of Parents/Family Support. The four parent participants indicated that parents are for the most part at fault because they don’t know what to do when their child becomes a teenager. Parents try to discipline their children the “old way” (corporal punishment)—the type of discipline their parents applied to them. When their children reach adolescence and some of them display rebellious behavior, parents don’t know what to do and lose total control. Most parents struggle between their traditional ways of raising a family and dealing with the expectations of American society. According to one participant, a Latino parent disciplined a teenage daughter with a belt; the daughter became upset and called the police which led to the participant’s arrest. The parent had to spend a night in the local jail, and because he didn’t have legal papers, his case was referred to immigration and eventually he was deported. The young lady was terribly sorry for the anguish and hardship she had caused to the family.
Two parent participants indicated that most Latino parents don’t know how to communicate and discipline their children. According to them, as the child grows, communication between parent and child diminishes. Children begin confiding more in their peers than their parents, and the rift in communication widens. Communication between parents and schools also tends to decline as students move up from elementary to secondary school. Parents indicated that when their children were in elementary, they received weekly notes and work from their children. At the middle and high school levels, they only know how their youngsters are doing in school when they receive a progress report or report cards.

According to parent participants, regarding children’s discipline, Latino parents begin losing control of their children in upper elementary. The situation is aggravated so that by the time the children are in middle school, and in some cases, by the time they are in high school, they have lost all control. Regarding the role of parents and the school, according to two parents, it is believed that the school has a responsibility to educate their children, and the parents’ responsibility lies only in sending them to school. Parents expressed not having the skills to assist their children with school work. This phenomenon was observed more among parents with little or no schooling and where no English is spoken at home.

One of the parent participants was adamant about Latino parents who say that they value education yet they fail to motivate their children. “You need to talk to your children about dreaming high and what they would like to become in the future” one participant said. These parents believe that in this country there are plenty of opportunities but their children may need to surpass temporary hardships and not be
overtaken by the flashy culture they see on television. “They need to value education if they want a better and brighter future” this participant said.

Role of the Schools. Two parent participants voiced their concern about the importance of improving communication between school and the families. One participant stated the importance of school and parental communication, but emphasized that most schools tend to overlook those with little or no English when they communicate with the parents. One parent articulated, “Quite often I receive information in English from the school or central administration, and I have no idea what the notification is about.” One parent gave an example referring to the district newspaper being mailed every month to all parents. “In the second page there is always a message from the superintendent to all the families. If his message is so important, why not at least his message be printed in Spanish so that we can read and be aware of what his message of the month is?” this parent said. Another parent expressed frustration that in most of the schools there is no one in the office who speaks Spanish, making it difficult for them to contact a teacher or their children. “It is difficult to feel welcomed if we cannot communicate with someone at the office or with the administrators,” one of parents said. Two parents questioned the amount of effort schools exert to include Latino parents in the Parent School Organizations or the School Improvement Teams. One parent indicated she attended one meeting at the beginning of the year but because the entire meeting was conducted in English, and there was no one to interpret, she did not attend other meetings.
Role of Friends and Others. Parent remarks indicated that with children attending elementary this issue was not a factor of concern because outside school hours, their children interacted primarily with other relatives or with neighbors close to their home. In addition, according to parents, children at early ages are easily encouraged to listen to their parents. Beginning in middle school, this is not the case, according to them, and it is even more difficult with those attending high school.

According to parents, not having other relatives in this community that they could use as examples and role models was one disadvantage for them. “In this community,” one participant said, “I don’t know many Latinos in public service or professionals that we can refer as role models.” In the school district, I can count Latino teachers or administrators with one hand” one parent observed with a smile.

Parents indicated that one way they can help to reduce risk factors is by taking special interest in learning or improving parental skills. They were hoping that local community organizations could take on this task that in the long run would have positive consequences for everyone.

Role of the Kalamazoo Promise. Parents indicated not having enough words to thank the donors and those who had this incredible idea. They expressed disappointment knowing that only a small group of Latinos were taking advantage of this significant gift. Parents also believed that undocumented Latinos in this community have no excuse not to go to college. “The only explanation a Latino parent and their children would have for not taking advantage of this scholarship,” one parent said, “is total ignorance, negligence, or lack of aspiration.”
Research Question 2

Are there new risk factors specific to Latino students inhibiting or restricting their academic success?

This study unpacked specific risk factors that according to participants are inhibiting the success of Latino students. Three additional factors this study uncovered that were not discussed in previous literature are: (1) speaking only Spanish while at school, (2) lack of participation in extracurricular activities, and (3) gang affiliation/activity.

Speaking Only in Spanish at School

This issue demonstrated great commonality and was mentioned by 100% of the participants (success and non-success). They expressed that at the same time Latinos cherished their language as a symbol of cultural identity and unity, they also expressed that speaking only in Spanish among their friends at school contributed to their segregation in the hallways and in the cafetera. By speaking only in Spanish during non-academic time, they believe their ability to acquire the second language was delayed in comparison to other Latino students who opted to integrate with the general population. Two non-successful participants acknowledged that speaking in Spanish with friends was more fun because they could tell jokes, and laugh with their friends; but if they could have motivated themselves to speak more English, their outcome would probably have been different.
Lack of Participation in Extracurricular Activities

Teachers volunteer after school several times a week to tutor students. The study revealed that Latino students do not take advantage of these services opting instead to leave school when the bell rang at the end of the school day. When asked why they did not take advantage of services intended to help in academic areas where they were having difficulties, responses varied from lack of transportation to go home, having responsibilities to oversee younger siblings at home, to being “not cool” and preferring to “hang around” with friends. Similar responses were provided regarding participation in sports and extracurricular activities.

In sports, participants responded that, with the exception of soccer, they did not have the skills to be part of competitive teams. The only after school activity that sparked moderate interest was the bilingual club meetings every other week.

Gang Affiliation/activity

The research also uncovered gang affiliation, an area that used to be confined to large cities in the United States. To the trained eye, this phenomenon has shifted to this community. At local schools there are now young Latinos with aspirations to become a gang member. According to participants, this is a more serious problem at secondary schools than administrators want to acknowledge. Signs of this type of activity include recruitment and initiation of new members; and consumption, sale and distribution of drugs. Latinos are having territorial disputes between two rival groups, the “Latin Kings” and the “M-13” or “Sureños.” Gang related activities tend to generate hostility against African American students, and among different factions of Latinos, creating uneasiness
on buses, in hallways, the cafeteria, and by extension to the classrooms. Students are suspended, disputes are unresolved, and students eventually fall behind in their classes.

Research Question 3

To what degree has the Kalamazoo Promise motivated Latino students to pursue postsecondary educational goals?

Of the 16 participants who were eligible for the Kalamazoo Promise, 10 of them took advantage of the scholarship while six participants lost it because they did not graduate or because they decided not to continue with postsecondary education. One of the participants did not qualify for the scholarship because he graduated the year before the Kalamazoo Promise was announced in 2004 (see Table 4).

When successful participants were asked what factors they believe contributed to their school success, except for the one participant who graduated the year before the Promise was announced, all were grateful for having the unique opportunity provided by the Promise. There was a mixture of responses regarding the effect of the Promise in the lives of all participants. From words of gratitude to a sense of great relief that some of their dreams would now become a reality from those taking advantage of this “incredible gift” to words of dismay and regret from those who did not finish school. One participant indicated that he considered himself the luckiest person for being in the right place and at the right time of his life. One participant indicated that the day the Promise was announced to them at the school, she went home and along with her mother, both cried with joy. The participant who graduated the year before the Promise was announced expressed disappointment, but he was lucky the Incentive (Scholarship) Program through
Western Michigan University allowed him to further his college education. Another participant indicated that any Latino residing in this community has no reason to say that college is not possible, considering that even “undocumented” Latinos now have the opportunity to dream of a college education because the Kalamazoo Promise does not single them out.

The news of the Kalamazoo Promise was in the words of one participant, “a dream comes true.” A few years before the Kalamazoo Promise was announced, a Latina student expressed that there was no reason for her to do well in school because there were no opportunities for her to go to college. This student stated that her parents did not have the financial resources, and that she would never qualify for scholarships or federal financial aid because she did not have a Social Security number, which is a standard requirement in the applications. Parents and Latino youth participants in this study, with words of joy, expressed that for them and other Latino students, there was now no excuse not to dream high and pursue a postsecondary degree. According to a report from the Kalamazoo Promise administration, the number of Latinos benefiting from this scholarship (completed college with funding from the Promise) has increased from 5 in 2002 to 10 in 2011 with a total of 75 Latinos who have received this scholarship in the 10 years since its inception. The fruits of this gift can be seen by Latinos graduating from college, some of them pursuing graduate degrees and others already employed as productive citizens in our community and across the U.S. Currently, the number of Latinos taking advantage of the Promise is low due to the high number of dropouts. It is too early to determine its full impact and will require more studies before significant data
is available to determine the effect of the Promise in retention and graduation rate of Latinos.

Research Question 4

To what extent can the Success Case Method be applied in the field of education?

The researcher made a bold decision to make use of an instrument that has proven to be effective in a business setting to be shifted to an issue with an educational framework. The process and outcomes from this research is an indication that the SCM is a viable and effective method that can be used in education related studies. The challenge in this study was to find out what is driving young Latinos to succeed or not succeed regarding educational outcomes rather than finding out what is working and what is not working in a business organization (the basis of the SCM). This model follows five straightforward steps that can be accomplished relatively quickly and with a small sample (outliers). In education, with the demands of academic performance, and the future of children at stake, school districts need to determine rather quickly if programs are to be left alone, to be improved, or be abandoned.

Chapter III provided a thorough description of the steps and modifications made to the model to fit this particular study. The first part of the study included the location of potential “success cases” and “non-success cases” according to the criteria established for success and non-success. The second step was to interview potential participants. This step revealed how this feature of the model allowed interviewing only a few cases rather than the original 738 potential participants. The SCM became a practical tool to use because there was no need to locate and contact a large number of participants, a task that
would be almost impossible considering that many potential participants had left the area with no forwarding addresses on record.

The study took into consideration the characteristics of the SCM considered unique to the evaluation process which was that only a handful of best-of-the-best (BOB) and worst-of-the-worst (WOW) would have to be contacted to proceed with the study. This approach rests on the assumption that it is very helpful to learn from those very few experiencing the greatest success, and from those few that are experiencing the least success. Their feedback can tell us a lot about how to make improvements and get even more successes and also reveals a lot about what to stay away from to prevent failure (Brinkerhoff, 2003).
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS
FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Discussion

One of the premises for this research is the growth of the Latino population in the United States, and by extension the increased number of K-12 Latino students attending public schools (550 in 2005 to 1,386 in 2012—a 40% increase in KPS). Researchers, policymakers, and educators often wonder what becomes of students as they progress through the educational system (Scott-Swail, 2005). Is it possible ("Sí Se Puede") for them to succeed not only in school, but professionally and at the same time find the way to earn a place in American society? Are Latino students finishing high school? If they are, how many of them are going on to college? Are they meeting holistic goals to become successful citizens? Two basic questions came out from this study: (1) If Latino students have succeeded, what were the factors behind their success? (2) If they did not succeed, what were the risk factors that obstructed their path to success? This study provided an opportunity to uncover the challenges facing Latino youth as they embark on their educational pathway to a two-year or four-year college degree. Table 2 illustrated the disproportionate numbers of academically successful Latinos when compared with other population groups in the United States. Of 100 students entering elementary school, 54% graduate from high school, 11% graduate from college, 4% complete a graduate degree, and only 0.4% completed a doctoral degree program.
The Kalamazoo Promise was incorporated into the study as a unique program characteristic of this community to determine the effect on Latinos as an incentive to success. According to a report from the Kalamazoo Promise administration, the number of Latinos benefiting from this scholarship (Latinos who completed college with funding from the Promise) has increased from 5 in 2002 to 10 in 2011 with a total of 75 Latinos who have received this scholarship in six years since its inception. The fruits of this gift can be seen by Latinos graduating from college, some of them pursuing graduate degrees and others already employed as productive citizens in our community and across the U.S. Currently, the number of Latinos taking advantage of the Promise is low due to a high number of dropouts. It is too early to determine its full impact and more studies are required before significant data is available to determine the effect of the Promise on retention and the graduation rate of Latinos.

The study focused on a small sample of Latino students from two high schools and two colleges in southwest Michigan. Participants included students who had graduated from high school and went on to college, students that did not graduate from high school, and parents of graduates and non-graduates. During the interviews, all participants had an opportunity to answer the same questions. The questionnaire was formatted following four predetermined themes and provided participants with an opportunity to share and elaborate their perceptions.

This study has provided an opportunity to address the reality and educational needs of Latinos in the United States. The design and methodology helped to bring to light protective factors to be fostered to ensure the success of young Latinos. At the same time, this study has come across some risk factors that need to be minimized in our quest
to reduce the number of young Latinos that drop out of school and to guide them on a path of academic success. If parents and school practitioners work together to enforce this study’s recommendations, we will be contributing to young Latinos’ success in becoming productive citizens.

Limitations

After reading the SCM (Brinkerhoff, 2003), the researcher was confident that this method could be applied to an educational setting with a small sample rather than a large population sample and still attain significant results. Foreseeing the limitation to recruit a larger pool of Latinos due to their transiency in the community, the researcher saw in this feature of the SCM an opportunity to use this method in the study. Another limitation to be considered in this study has to do with the language used to conduct the interviews. Although the majority of participants preferred to have the interview performed in English, it is important to recognize that Spanish was their primary language. This fact could have limited the fluency and wording of their responses. Great effort was made to ensure fidelity of the transcripts to avoid procedural and potential biases. During the transcription, the interviews conducted in Spanish were translated simultaneously from Spanish to English. Transcribing simultaneously from a Spanish audio into English could limit the accuracy of the statements of the interviewee.

Finally, there might be unforeseen limitations not addressed by the researcher, but the rigor and length of the study has proven the feasibility and utility of the SCM as an evaluation tool in the context of education. It is also important to recognize that because
of the qualitative nature of the design, purposeful sample, themes and subthemes, the results cannot be generalized to other populations.

Summary

The rigorous undertaking of this qualitative research has to do with the purpose of interviewing to find out what is working and what is not working according to Latino participants. This study intended to access the Latino perspective, and to find potential solutions to their academic non-success (Patton, 2008). The extensive data generated from the interviews provided an opportunity to unfold a personal perspective from the BOB and WOW participants, the role of parents and how schools can foster academic success for Latinos. The use of a qualitative method provided for in-depth and openness of the data derived from the questions addressing the four preconceived categories; it was based on the assumption that the perspective of others was meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

The standardized open-ended interview approach in the study included a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words (see Appendix B—Interview Protocol). This factor was important to minimize variation in questioning and to reduce the possibility of bias when interviewing different people (Patton, 2008).

The challenge to locate an adequate number of participants was one of the determinant factors to explore the use of the SCM in the study. The researcher was
consciously trying to minimize biases during the whole process to avoid interfering with the collection and analysis of data from the 21 participants.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was, as previously stated, to gather extensive descriptions from young Latinos and their parents to determine protective factors and risk factors responsible for academic success and non-success of Latino students. This study provided an opportunity to follow a methodological approach using the SCM as pioneered by Brinkerhoff (2003) to find solutions to the non-success of Latino students. For the purpose of this study, potential participants were divided into three groups: Group 1—Latino successes. This group included students who had graduated from high school, continued their education at a postsecondary institution and managed to maintain a good standing grade point average status or have graduated. Group 2—Non-successful Latinos. This group included Latinos who had dropped out of high school. Group 3 was created from parents of participants who were asked if they were interested in being part of the study. The inclusion of parents added significance to the study due to the importance parents play culturally with the upbringing of young Latinos.

It was remarkable to observe during the analysis of the responses from the formatted interview that five recurring themes were repeatedly voiced as relevant among the three groups of participants:

1. **Personal motivation** was considered to be the leading protective factor to succeed. Lack of motivation was also given as the principal risk factor influencing their disinterest in school and poor academic performance which eventually led them to leave school.
2. **Parental support** was considered a protective factor in the success of their children. Lack of appropriate parental support was, according to participants, a risk factor leading to the non-success of Latino children. Participants stated the importance of parents in the context of their own cultural values to be responsible in the future success or non-success of young Latinos. Parents ranked themselves to be primarily responsible for the success or non-success of Latino youth. Parents expressed that even their lack of English proficiency was not an excuse to not helping their children to do well in school and aspire to success. They emphasized there are many ways to help their children, but they need to know how.

3. The role of the school was considered an important protective factor in the success of Latino students. Participants also stated that some degree of negligence from schools toward Latinos could be considered a risk factor that limited opportunities for success to them. There were certain school programs that participants were grateful of, especially some of the initiatives from the bilingual education department. The bilingual club at the high school was favorably commended as an organization fostering Latino pride and unity. The bilingual department was also instrumental in informing and updating Latino families by communicating in Spanish during monthly meetings, by telephone, or additional translated printed materials. Parents were also grateful for basic computer skill classes offered to them in an effort to bring technology to them. Parents appeared to be somewhat satisfied with the overall services provided by the schools which was contrary to the students’ perception of school administrators. The students’ perception was to some extent seeing school administrators as indifferent to their needs, especially at the secondary level.
4. The role friends and others play in determining the future success or non-success of young Latinos. According to student participants, good friends and role models were considered protective factors to their success. However, certain friends and lack of role models were, according to them, risk factors having a negative effect on their success. A theme of lesser importance to parents but with recurring frequency with Latino youth was the role of friends during the adolescent period of their life. According to Parker and Asher (1996), relationships with friends may serve as a protective function from stress and adjustment problems. In this study, Latino youth reported how important friendship was among their peers. About 90% of all student participants indicated the primary reason to go to school was to see their friends. Socializing with other Latinos and speaking in Spanish was seen as a natural phenomenon because they felt more comfortable, and it provided them with a sense of unity. This study provided two different views of how friends or the action of friends influenced their lives with two different outcomes: (1) Participants stated that seeing friends “going in the wrong direction”—skipping classes, failing grades, becoming involved in behavioral issues; in essence, not taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the school—was a motivator to do the opposite and do well in school. (2) Participants, primarily the non-successful, expressed personal disappointment and regret. According to them it was difficult to say no to their friends. Peer acceptance was so strong that their school expectations became irrelevant in their daily life. They wished they could have thought differently so that their outcome could have been positive.

5. The Kalamazoo Promise was considered a protective factor as a unique financial incentive to further their education and success. Young Latinos in this
community are gradually recognizing the possibility of a college degree as a reachable goal due to the Promise. No doubt, this incentive strongly enticed them to strive for success. Participants forcefully voiced the magnitude of ensuring that more Latinos take advantage and maximize the benefits of this incredible and significant scholarship program.

Tables 5 summarizes protective factors that need to be maximized for success as stated by participants and Table 6 summarizes risk factors that need to be minimized as stated by participants.

### Table 5

**Protective Factors Noted by Successful Students, Non Successful Students and Parents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Motivation</th>
<th>Parental Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Improvement for themselves</td>
<td>• Advice and encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Find high paying jobs</td>
<td>• Trust and supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not living in poverty</td>
<td>• Family traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to support themselves</td>
<td>• Family communication and interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to support their family</td>
<td>• Promoting family and religious values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Making education a priority in life</td>
<td>• Attending school functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seeing other peers dropping out</td>
<td>• Consistent discipline and routines at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not becoming a negative national statistic</td>
<td>• Helping with school work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not working in a factory the rest of their life</td>
<td>• Interest in what the students do at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting parents expectations</td>
<td>• Communication with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having siblings as role models</td>
<td>• Encourage use of after school tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An opportunity to move away from home</td>
<td>• Stressed the importance of school attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the School</td>
<td>Role of Friends and Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A place to socialize and meet friends</td>
<td>• Influence from relatives and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A place where learning took place</td>
<td>• Positive role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participating in the Dual Language Immersion Program</td>
<td>• Following older siblings footsteps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ESL and bilingual education support</td>
<td>• Example for younger siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Elementary school–language foundation acquired</td>
<td>• Seeing peers not graduating and struggling to find jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Secondary school–ESL/other academic skills acquired</td>
<td>• Selecting supportive and positive friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Help provided to newcomers</td>
<td>• Academic support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Caring and dedicated teachers</td>
<td>• Pride of heritage and ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Grateful for school services (transport., lunch, books)</td>
<td>• Opportunity to speak Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Services from the bilingual program and staff (registration, translation/communication between school and parents, etc.)</td>
<td>• Support for newcomers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bilingual club</td>
<td>• Attending school activities (athletics, plays, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• After school tutoring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of the Kalamazoo Promise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A special gift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A dream comes true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An opportunity of my lifetime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being in the right place at the right time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

**Risk Factors Noted by Successful Students, Non-Successful Students and Parents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Motivation</th>
<th>Parental Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of personal motivation</td>
<td>Parents with little or no academic education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not establishing educational priorities</td>
<td>Failing to establish educational expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaming others for their lack of success</td>
<td>Unbalance between time spent at work with the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not proficient in English and having an accent</td>
<td>Conflict between discipline, family traditions and American culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling they had to work harder than other students</td>
<td>Limited communication and interaction with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not taking school seriously (foolish behavior)</td>
<td>Not encouraging participation in sports and extracurricular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immature behavior</td>
<td>Requiring older children to oversee siblings (so no time for extracurricular activities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipping classes/school</td>
<td>Hands-off approach to education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using drugs</td>
<td>Lack of communication with school staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in gang activity</td>
<td>Lacking parental skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not participating in sports</td>
<td>Family low socio-economic status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unimportance of attendance</td>
<td>Immigration status and the fear of deportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration status</td>
<td>Oblivious about school &amp; friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing discrimination</td>
<td>Not attending school functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believing they don’t need school for employment</td>
<td>Not helping with school work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College degree as an unreachable goal</td>
<td>Not stressing the importance of attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having systemic counseling available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of the School</th>
<th>Role of Friends and Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failing to meet the needs of Latino students</td>
<td>Influence by peer pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifference toward Latinos from administrators</td>
<td>Not having positive role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communications not translated to non-English speaking parents</td>
<td>Involvement in gang affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having bilingual staff in the school offices</td>
<td>Speaking only in Spanish at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not including Latino parents in PTO and SIT</td>
<td>Desire to belong to a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not making effort to include Latinos in sports</td>
<td>False sense of security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate services from counseling department</td>
<td>Feeling discriminated by other students or community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not challenging Latinos to take AP courses</td>
<td>Misguided ethnic unity/pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduating students unprepared for college rigor</td>
<td>Sense of isolation (no friends from other ethnic/racial groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor enforcement of Student Code of Conduct</td>
<td>Lack of involvement in positive activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignoring behavioral issues (inconsistency)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enforcing truancy regulations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not being proactive to Latino concerns and needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of inclusion of Latinos in school activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff lacking ESL methodology and multicultural and linguistic awareness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers assuming that everyone speaks English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having enough Latino role-models (staff)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Kalamazoo Promise</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not fully understood by parents and students</td>
<td>Needing reinforcing at the secondary level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceives as an unreachable (distant) goal</td>
<td>Losing scholarship due to low performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not nurtured enough to keep Promise alive</td>
<td>Need of support for Latinos in college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignorance, negligence or lack of aspirations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was conducted to explore and identify protective factors having a positive influence on Latino students to succeed in school. The study also included identifying risk factors that have a detrimental effect on Latino youth, creating a barrier...
to their achieving academic success and leading to dropping out of school. The extensive interview data yielded profound insight into the dreams, expectations, frustrations and concerns of young Latinos who considered themselves “successes.” In the same way, “non-success” participants were regretful of their poor choices. All five non-successful participants expressed words of advice to young Latinos to discourage them from following the actions they now regret and to encourage others to try hard in making a reality the “American Dream.”

Results from this study indicated that support from parents is essential to ensure the success of Latino children. An area of interest that needs further study relates to the importance of parenting skills. Latino parents struggle with their own traditional approaches to raising a child and the expectations of American society. Additional research needs to be done with cultural assimilation and how to include parents as partners in the educational journey of their children. The traditional expectation of Latino parents believing and having total trust in the school system is not consistent with K-12 U.S. education. Future research should explore new approaches where parents are considered stakeholders in determining what is best for their children.

Responses from student and parent participants reflected a concern that needs to be further addressed regarding gang activity in the schools. This phenomenon has extended to the middle schools and is aggravated at the high school level. Parents and youth participants indicated that proactive approaches are needed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children at school. Participants believe that school administrators cannot continue putting aside this issue, pretending that the problem will eventually go away and hoping that some of the more serious incidents will not make headlines in the local news.
Table 7 provides a summary of previous research and the significant factors exposed from this study.

Table 7

Comparison of Brenes’ Research on Protective/Risk Factors with Previous Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Prior Research</th>
<th>Study Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Protective**   | • Rigorous academic preparation (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2006)  
                   • High levels of personal functioning (Adelman, 2004; Baxter-Magolda, 2001)  
                   • Goal purposes, lifestyle, personal traits and characteristics (Gregory, 2003)  
                   • Life skills and time management (Schreiner & Barton, 2001; Chaltin, 2010)  
                   • Diversity, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Gurin, Nagda & López, 2003)  
                   • Family background (Kao & Thompson, 2003)  
                   • First or second generation (Fry, 2002)  
                   • Resilience: ability and commitment to persist, (Meza-Discua, 2011; Carranza, 2010)  
                   • Family traditions (Carranza, 2010)  
                   • Value and importance of education (Auerback, 2006)  
                   • Bilingual programs (Lindholm-Leary, 2003)  
                   • Appropriate School Funding, Educational Programs, Supportive parents, Friends, and Participation in school activities (Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado & Cortes (2009)  
                   • Effective teaching practices, Culturally-responsive teaching, Effective communities & school-based programs for Hispanic students, (Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002) | • Personal Motivation  
                   • Family Support  
                   • Exemplary and Caring Teachers  
                   • Role Models  
                   • Bilingual/Program Services  
                   • Participation in sports and extracurricular activities |
| **Risk**         | • Disengaged home environment (García, 2001)  
                   • Low parental involvement and socioeconomic status (Rumberger, 2011)  
                   • Disconnect between parental expectation and children aspiration, Family financial needs requiring the child to work (Carpenter, 2008)  
                   • Parents have good intentions, but unable to assist their children (Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvin, 2007)  
                   • Poverty, Parents delegating responsibilities to children taking them away from schooling, Parents unable to balance work and family responsibilities, Lack of English, Legal status (Schneider & White, 2005)  
                   • Lack of qualified teachers, inappropriate teaching practices, and at–risk school environment (Padron, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002)  
                   • Alienation and low expectations for students at school (Soza, Yzaguirre & Perilla, 2007)  
                   • Low literacy level in their native language (August, 2002)  
                   • Fatalistic perception (Navarrete, Betancourt & Flynn, 2007)  
                   • Inadequate academic preparation (Foster, 2006)  
                   • Lack of personal motivation  
                   • Indifferent/uncaring parents  
                   • Unsympathetic school Administrators  
                   • Lack of Adequate School counseling services  
                   • Speaking only in Spanish at the school  
                   • Negative peer influence  
                   • Group identification needs and gang activity  
                   • Lack of participation in sports and extracurricular activities (tutoring) |
More studies are also needed to address the role of friends among Latino students. Children love to identify with something; this could be their school colors as well as their favorite team sport. Latinos are proud of their identity, language, and culture, but they also recognize that becoming proficient in English can provide them a better opportunity to succeed. More activities need to be explored to facilitate the inclusion of Latinos in extracurricular activities at the schools. Because friendships, their personal choices, and future aspirations also play an important role in the growth of a child, further studies are required concerning the role and consequence of gang allegiance in the lives of Latino youth.

Conclusions

The main assumption from this study stated that Latino students are not succeeding in school. If they are not succeeding, what are the factors leading down a path of non-success? If they do, what the protective factors are helping them succeed? The study provided an opportunity to uncover several factors that, when fostered by the individual, supported by the parents, and nurtured by the school, led to academic success. At the same time, the study provided an opportunity to analyze risk factors that the individual needed to avoid, also under the caring and watchful guidance of parents. Participants voiced what schools are failing to do, but if corrected, could dramatically lessen the number of Latino students feeling unsuccessful in the classroom and would reduce the high number of dropouts from public education institutions.

Personal motivation is an attribute that Latino students need to work on their own, but can be cultivated by constant encouragement from parents. Private institutions and
policymakers need to follow the lead of the visionary donors and the community that gave birth to the Kalamazoo Promise. The college-going culture trend across the country has limited value for poor families living from day to day. The same can be said for Latino youth that voluntarily or involuntarily reside in the U.S. because their undocumented (legal immigration status) parents brought them to this country—the likelihood of having the opportunity to become legal residents is quite distant. However, in this community, these young Latinos have no excuse to say that they cannot go to college. The Kalamazoo Promise will pay for four years of college regardless of legal status and with “ganas” (courage) it is possible for Latino students to succeed!

This study revealed that more needs to be done by the schools if they are to promote more success among Latinos. School administrators need to give attention to this sector of the school population that feels disenfranchised by administrators and the people responsible for their guidance. A similar expectation was exposed from parents’ responses who felt unwelcomed at some schools. According to parents, a great divide was evident when comparing school-parent communication from the elementary, secondary, and central administration personnel. The Latino community dreams about the day when more Latino faces can be seen among teachers, administrators, counselors, and other school personnel; and where speaking Spanish is advantageous and not a deterrent. Table 8 presents an extensive list of recommendations generated from the interviews with the belief that if they are implemented by students, parents, and schools the number of Latinos succeeding in school will increase.
Table 8

Recommendations to Students, Parents, and School Administrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Students can Do</th>
<th>What Parents can Do</th>
<th>What Schools can Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Believe in the importance of education</td>
<td>• Inspire motivation in your child</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take challenging classes</td>
<td>• Show interest in the school of your child</td>
<td>• Be sensitive to the needs of English Language Learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dream about going to college</td>
<td>• Ask your children about school</td>
<td>• Acquire strategies to teach ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish academic and professional goals</td>
<td>• Check homework daily</td>
<td>• Do not assume all students in class speak English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make attendance to school a priority</td>
<td>• Help your child establish personal goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be ready for classes</td>
<td>• Get to know the teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take notes and ask questions in class</td>
<td>• Attend school events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take advantage of after school tutoring services</td>
<td>• Get involved in the PTO/SIP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complete and submit homework</td>
<td>• Inform the school if your children will be absent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Study every day</td>
<td>• Contact teachers for updates/grades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participate in sports</td>
<td>• Attend Parent-Teacher conferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Get involved in extracurricular activities</td>
<td>• Attend Open Houses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Speak English as much as possible</td>
<td>• Volunteer for classroom or school activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Socialize with other racial and ethnic groups</td>
<td>• Voice concerns and propose solutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Select friends that are supportive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoid harmful acquaintances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Get to know your counselor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Latinos are in this country, some because they were born here and some because they arrived from 21 Spanish speaking countries for a variety of reasons, but all have decided to make this country their home. They are here to stay, and they will continue contributing to the economic growth and success of this country. This study affirms the belief that yes, “sí se puede” (it is possible)—Latino students can succeed in school. The study provides insight into what works and what does not work for Latino youth, what parents can do to help their children succeed and provides recommendations to educators to ensure that schools meet the needs of the young and striving Latino population in this country.

In addition, the researched is convinced that this study has proven that the SCM has been a viable model to be applied in educational related evaluation studies. School
districts can save time and financial resources in determining the effectiveness of educational programs or if such programs need to be left alone, need to be improved, or need to be changed.

As a final point, it is important to recall that this study was a utilization-focused evaluation which began with the premise that its value should be judged by its utilization and actual use. With the primary intention and responsibility to apply findings and implement recommendations, Table 8 provides a list of practical and concise recommendations of what students can do; what parents can do; and what schools can do to ensure not only academic success, but a brighter future for young Latinos in this country.
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Appendix A

HSIRB in English and Spanish
What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
You will be asked to respond to questions regarding your personal background and experiences. The questions are designed to help understand the factors that influence Latino students' educational outcomes.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
Latino students are the largest group dropping out from school. Very few of them go to college and graduate. This study is intended to investigate what are those factors influencing a large percentage of Latinos to drop out from school and at the same time investigating what are the factors that motivate the few students that stay in school, graduate and pursue and complete a post-secondary degree.

Who can participate in this study?
In order to conduct this study we need the participation of Latino students that have attended Kalamazoo Public Schools from 2002 to 2010. The study will include male and female Latino former students that did not complete school and those that completed school including those that have completed a college/university degree. Because the research will be conducted following the Success Case Method, we do not need a large sample to complete the study.

Where will this study take place?
This study will take place in the Kalamazoo County. If you agree to participate, we can schedule a 60 minutes interview at the time and location of your preference. I can interview you at your home at your earliest convenience or we can meet at the public library in downtown or at one of the library branches (East Main or Washington Square). I will accommodate to your convenience including evenings or during the weekends. I will make the proper arrangements to secure a private office to conduct the interview. To facilitate the meeting, I can also provide transportation or compensate you for fuel expenses.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
If you wish to participate, we will meet only once. The meeting will take only one hour including the time to read and ask questions regarding the consent form. There is no need to schedule a second or subsequently meetings.
What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
You will be asked to respond to a series of questions addressing your perception about education, what were the reasons that motivated you to stay or not stay in school. Some questions will include your perception to what degree your family or the school contributed to the decision to complete or not complete school. You can refuse to answer any of the questions or change any of your answers or you can stop the interview at any time. The interview will be audio-recorded, but if you have objections to this, I will write your responses.

What information is being measured during the study?
The study intends to gather as many factors as possible that could be the causes affecting the decision of Latino students to dropout from school. Are some of these factors more prevalent than others? Are they more attributed to the individual, the family or the school environment or a combination of these three components? The same will be applied to the identification of those factors that have an impact influencing Latino students to stay and succeed in school.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
There is no specific risk for you as participant. There will be only some inconvenience because you will have to meet with the evaluator at a particular day and time and the inconvenience of the location for the interview. I will be flexible to accommodate to your convenience. In the event that you feel uncomfortable answering certain questions, or the disclosing of specific information about a school, program, person, etc., and later on, wishing that you did not disclose that much information, if this is the case, the evaluator will work with you on developing a generic type of statement(s) or the statement will deleted.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
The benefits of this study for you is the acknowledgment that you are providing your insights, experiences, perceptions, and recommendations associated with improving outcomes to transition Latino students from high school and subsequently enroll in post-secondary education, including the identification of risk factors and protective factors. Broader benefits of your participation include the contribution of data to generate a credible and useful report with some insight on determining the protective factors of success and the risk factors in order to increase the success of Latino students and subsequently leading to the improvement of programs and policies in schools.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
There are no costs associated with participating in this study. Transportation arrangements in order to meet at the local libraries or reimbursement for gasoline expenses will be made.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
There is no monetary compensation nor any other type of compensation expected for participating in this study.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
Only the principal investigator and the student investigator will have access to the information collected during the study. The evaluator will take notes during the interview if the interviewee gives consent; the interview may be recorded. The evaluator will note your name so he or she can track you for possible follow-up questions. This list will also be locked in the office of the principal investigator. All notes gathered by the evaluators will be housed in the Educational Leadership, Research and Technology (ELRT) and locked in a file cabinet of the principal investigator's office. Each interviewee's name will be replaced with a code number, and this number will be used to identify your interview question responses, so they are not
linked to you personally. After transcribing notes onto a computer software program (e.g., Word) and ensuring accuracy of the notes, the notes will be shredded and tapes will be erased. The data from this study will be used for evaluation purposes, but we need to let you know that the overall results of the evaluation may be published in academic articles and presented in meetings for researchers and others.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?
Any time during the interview, you can refuse to answer a question or stop the interview without prejudice, penalty, or risk.

In addition, if you feel uncomfortable with an answer or the interview after the interview has been completed and while the study is still being conducted, you may contact the primary investigator, Dr. Brooks Aspilte at (269) 387-5286 or brooks.aspilte@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8295 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is earlier than one year.

----------------------------------------------------

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

_________________________________________  ____________
Please Print Your Name                                      Date

_________________________________________
Participant’s Signature
Formulario de Consentimiento
(Estudiante Participante - Spanish)

Principal Investigador: Brooks Applegate, Ph.D.
Estudiante Investigador: Manuel J. Brenes
Título del Estudio: “Si Se Puede”- Los Estudiantes Latinos Pueden Triunfar en la Escuela: Un Estudio del Método del Éxito

Esta es una invitación para participar en un estudio de investigación con el título de “Si Se Puede”- Los Estudiantes Latinos Pueden Triunfar en la Escuela: Un Estudio del Método del Éxito. Esta investigación es parte de los requisitos para el título de doctor (Ph.D.) de Manuel J. Brenes. Este documento de consentimiento explica el propósito de la investigación, los procedimientos para el estudio, los riesgos y beneficios para los participantes en este estudio. Favor de leer el formulario cuidadosamente y puede hacer preguntas si necesita algunaclarificación.

¿Qué es lo que se está tratando de investigar con este estudio?
Que los estudiantes latinos son el grupo más grande de estudiantes que no terminan la escuela. Muy pocos terminan la escuela y se logran graduarse de la universidad. Con este estudio tratamos de investigar cuales son los factores que influencian a un gran número de jóvenes para no terminar la escuela y al mismo tiempo queremos investigar cuales son los factores que ayudan a un grupo reducido de jóvenes latinos para permanecer en la escuela, poder graduarse y completar sus estudios universitarios.

¿Quiénes pueden participar en este estudio?
Para poder realizar este estudio necesitamos la participación de jóvenes latinos que han asistido a las Escuelas Públicas de Kalamazoo durante los años 2002 a 2010. Este estudio va a incluir hombres y mujeres latinos que fueron estudiantes no terminaron la escuela o también aquellos que si la terminaron y que continuaron y se han graduado con un título universitario. Debido a que en este estudio se va a usar el Método del Éxito, no es necesario tener una muestra grande de participantes para poder completar el estudio.

¿En dónde va a tener lugar este estudio?
Si acepta participar, podemos programar una entrevista de no más de 60 minutos en el lugar de su preferencia. La entrevista puede ser en su casa o en la biblioteca pública en el centro de la ciudad o en una de las sucursales de la biblioteca (East Main o Washington Square). Podemos acomodarnos a su conveniencia ya sea por las tardes o durante el fin de semana. Se pueden hacer los arreglos necesarios para reservar un lugar para hacer la entrevista en forma privada. Para facilitar la reunión se le puede proporcionar transporte o se le compensara por el consumo de gasolina.

¿Cuánto tiempo se necesita para la reunión?
Si está interesado en participar, nos reuniremos solo una vez. La reunión tarda solamente una hora. Esto incluye el tiempo para leer el formulario de consentimiento. No hay necesidad de hacer otras reuniones.
¿Qué es lo que se le va a preguntar o tiene que hacer si usted acepta participar en este estudio?
A usted se le va a pedir que responda a una serie de preguntas de lo que usted opina acerca de la educación, cuales son las razones que le motivaron a permanecer en la escuela o las razones por las cuales usted no terminó la escuela. Algunas preguntas también se referirán a su percepción del grado de influencia que su familia o la escuela tuvo en esta decisión de completar o su educación. Usted podrá reusar a contestar cualquiera de las preguntas o interrumpir la entrevista en cualquier momento. La entrevista va a ser grabado en una cinta, pero si usted no quiere, se tomarán notas durante la entrevista.

¿Qué información se va a usar para ser analizada en este estudio?
En este estudio se van a agrupar los factores identificados como los causantes de influir en los estudiantes latinos en la decisión de no continuar en la escuela. ¿Son algunos factores más prevalentes que otros? ¿Son estos factores atribuidos solamente al estudiante, a la familia, a la escuela, o una combinación de los tres componentes? El mismo procedimiento se va a aplicar en la identificación de los factores que tienen un impacto positivo influyendo a los estudiantes a continuar y tener éxito en la escuela.

¿Cuáles son los riesgos de participar en este estudio y si los hay, como se pueden reducir?
No hay riesgos específicos al participar en este estudio. Puede haber algún inconveniente porque tiene que reunirse con la persona haciendo la entrevista en un lugar y en tiempo acordado mutuamente. La persona que hace la entrevista demostrará flexibilidad a su conveniencia. Si la posibilidad fuera que usted se siente incómodo en responder a alguna pregunta en particular, o con respecto a una persona, la escuela o programa de la escuela usted puede reusar responder a dicha pregunta. Si más adelante usted desea cambiar alguna de sus respuestas, la persona que hace la entrevista puede cambiarla o cancelarla totalmente.

¿Cuáles son los beneficios al participar en este estudio?
El principal beneficio al participar en este estudio es la satisfacción de que usted está contribuyendo con sus ideas, experiencias, percepciones y haciendo recomendaciones que pueden contribuir para que aumente el número de estudiantes latinos que permanezcan en la escuela y subsecuentemente puedan graduarse de la Universidad. La identificación de factores de riesgo para los estudiantes puede ayudar a que muchos estudiantes no interrumpan la escuela. En una forma más amplia, su participación también puede contribuir a mejorar los programas que ayudan a los estudiantes latinos en las escuelas lo que al final puede tener un impacto positivo en las directivas de los distritos.

¿Hay algún costo asociado con su participación en este estudio?
No hay ningún costo asociado con su participación en este estudio. Se pueden hacer arreglos necesarios para transportarlo al lugar de la entrevista o se le puede compensar con el costo de gasolina si es necesario.

¿Hay algún tipo de compensación por participar en este estudio?
No hay ninguna compensación monetaria o de otra índole con la participación en este estudio.

¿Quienes van a tener acceso a la información que se va a recolectar durante este estudio?
Solamente el investigador principal y el estudiante investigador tendrán acceso a la información colectada en este estudio. El evaluador tomará notas durante la entrevista. Si el participante acepta la entrevista se puede grabar en una cinta magnetofoónica. El evaluador anotará su nombre para poder identificar las preguntas. La lista se guardará con llave en la oficina del investigador principal. Toda la información recolectada se archivará en la Oficina del Departamento de Educación de Liderazgo,
Investigación y Tecnología en la oficina del investigador principal. Los nombres de las personas que participen se van a cambiar con un número clave para poder identificar las respuestas obtenidas durante la entrevista de manera que los nombres de las personas y las respuestas permanezcan anónimas. Las entrevistas se van a transcribir en la computadora usando Microsoft-Word y se garantizará la exactitud en las transcripciones. Se procederá luego a destruir las notas y borrar las cintas magnéticas. Los datos obtenidos en este estudio se analizarán estadísticamente y los resultados se usarán como la base de este estudio. Los resultados se van a publicar en esta disertación y pueden también ser publicadas en conferencias o compartidas con otros investigadores.

¿Qué pasa si usted desea dejar de participar durante el estudio? En cualquier momento durante la entrevista usted puede retrasar contestar alguna de las preguntas o suspender el resto de la entrevista sin ninguna consecuencia negativa para usted. En caso de que después de la entrevista usted cambie de opinión con alguna de sus respuestas, usted puede comunicarse con el investigador principal, Brooks Applegate, Ph.D. al (269) 387-3886 o brooks.applegate@wmich.edu. Usted también puede contactar la Dirección de Estudios Humanos y Revisión Institucional al 269-387-2293 o con el Vice Presidente de Investigaciones al 269-387-6298 en caso de que tenga alguna pregunta durante el estudio.

Este documento ha sido aprobado por la Dirección de Estudios Humanos y Revisión Institucional (HSIRB) como lo indica el sello estampado con la firma del director en la esquina superior de este documento. No participe en este estudio si la fecha estampada es más de un año.

Por este medio hago constar que he leído este formulario de consentimiento. Los riesgos y beneficios se me han explicado. Acepto participar en este estudio.

Escriba su Nombre con Letra de Molde

Fecha

Firma del Participante
Appendix B

Consent Form
Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Brooks Applegate, Ph.D.
Student Investigator: Manuel J. Brenes
Title of Study: “Sí Se Puede”- Latino Students Can Succeed in School: A Success Case Method Study

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled “Sí Se Puede”- Latino Students Can Succeed in School: A Success Case Method Study. This project will serve as Manuel J. Brenes’ dissertation for the requirements of the doctoral degree (Ph.D) program. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
Latino students are the largest group dropping out from school. Very few of them go to college and graduate. This study is intended to investigate what are those factors influencing a large percentage of Latinos to dropout from school and at the same time investigating what are the factors that motivate the few students that stay in school, graduate and pursue and complete a post-secondary degree.

Who can participate in this study?
In order to conduct this study we need the participation of Latino students that have attended Kalamazoo Public Schools from 2002 to 2010. The study will include male and female Latino former students that did not complete school and those that completed school including those that have completed a college/university degree. Because the research will be conducted following the Success Case Method, we do not need a large sample to complete the study.

Where will this study take place?
This study will take place in the Kalamazoo County. If you agree to participate, we can schedule a 60 minutes interview at the time and location of your preference. I can
interview you at your home at your earliest convenience or we can meet at the public
library in downtown or at one of the library branches (East Main or Washington Square).
I will accommodate to your convenience including evenings or during the weekends. I
will make the proper arrangements to secure a private office to conduct the interview.
To facilitate the meeting, transportation can be provided or compensation for fuel
expenses.

**What is the time commitment for participating in this study?**

If wish to participate, we will meet only once. The meeting will take only one hour
including the time to read and ask questions regarding the consent form. There is no need
to schedule a second or subsequently meetings.

**What will be asked to do if choosing to participate in this study?**

You will be asked to respond a series of questions addressing your perception about
education, what were the reasons that motivated you to stay or not stay in school. Some
questions will include your perception to what degree your family or the school
contributed to the decision to complete or not complete school. You can refuse to answer
any of the questions or change any of your answers or you can stop the interview at any
time. The interview will be audio-recorded, but if you have objections to this, I will write
your responses.

**What information is being measured during the study?**

The study intends to gather as many factors as possible that could be the causes affecting
the decision of Latino students to dropout from school. Are some of these factors more
prevalent than others? Are they more attributed to the individual, the family or the school
environment or a combination of these three components? The same will be applied to
the identification of those factors that have an impact influencing Latino students to stay
and succeed in school.

**What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be
minimized?**

There is no specific risk for you as participant. There will be only some inconvenience
because you will have to meet with the evaluator at a particular day and time and the
inconvenience of the location for the interview. I will be flexible to accommodate to your
convenience. In the event that you feel uncomfortable answering certain questions, or the
disclosing of specific information about a school, program, person, etc., and later on wishing that you did not disclose that much information. If his is the case, the evaluator will work with you on developing a generic type of statement(s) or the statement will deleted.

**What are the benefits of participating in this study?**
The benefits of this study for you is the acknowledgement that you are providing your insights, experiences, perceptions, and recommendations associated with improving outcomes to transition Latino students from high school and subsequently enroll in post-secondary education, including the identification of risk factors and protective factors. Broader benefits of your participation include the contribution of data to generate a credible and useful report with some insight on determining the protective factors of success and the risk factors in order to increase the success of Latino students and subsequently leading to the improvement of programs and policies in schools.

**Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?**
There are no costs associated with participating in this study. Transportation arrangements in order to meet at the local libraries or reimbursement for gasoline expenses will be made.

**Is there any compensation for participating in this study?**
There is no monetary compensation nor any other type of compensation expected for participating in this study.

**Who will have access to the information collected during this study?**
Only the principal investigator and the student investigator will have access to the information collected during the study. The evaluator will be taking notes during the interview. If the interviewee gives consent, the interview may be recorded. The evaluator will note your name so he or she can track you for possible, follow-up questions. This list will also be locked in the office of the principal investigator. All notes gathered by the evaluators will be housed in the Educational Leadership, Research and Technology (ELRT) and locked in a file cabinet of the principal investigator’s office. Each interviewee’s name will be replaced with a code number, and this number will be used to identify your interview question responses, so they are not linked to you personally. After
transcribing notes onto a computer software program (e.g., Word) and ensuring accuracy of the notes, the notes will be shredded and tapes will be erased. The data from this study will be used for evaluation purposes, but we need to let you know that the overall results of the evaluation may be published in academic articles and presented in meetings for researchers and others.

**What if you want to stop participating in this study?**

Any time during the interview, you can refuse to answer a question or stop the interview without prejudice, penalty, or risk.

In addition, if you feel uncomfortable with an answer or the interview after the interview has been completed and while the study is still being conducted, you may contact the primary investigator, Dr. Brooks Applegate at (269) 387-3886 or brooks.applegate@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

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I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

___________________________________    __________________
Please Print Your Name                    Date

____________________________________
Participant’s Signature
Appendix C

Interview Protocol
Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

“Sí Se Puede” – Latino Students Can Succeed in School: A Success Case Method Study

Some Latino students graduate from high school, enroll in a post-secondary institution (2-years or 4-years program), graduate and go on with their lives. Others for different reasons do not finish high school and also go on with their lives. What we are looking here is collecting information about what are some of the positive factors in the personal life of the participant, family, and school environment or programs that contributed to their success. At the same time, we are looking to collect information regarding factors in the personal life of the participant, in the family, or in the school environment or programs that might have contributed to the non-success in school and eventually having to drop out.

Date: ____________________________________________________

Interview Location: _________________________________________________

Interviewee Name: _________________________________________

Protective factors (reasons) – Are the variables having a positive effect/influence and that might be attributed to help Latino students to stay in school and graduate?

Risk factors (reasons) – Are the variables having a negative effect/influence and that might be the reasons why some Latino students are not successful in school and eventually they drop out?

Success – Latino students that stay in school and meet all the academic requirements from the school and graduate – this applies also to students completing high school and pursuing a postsecondary degree.
1. Describe your school experiences.

- How many years of schooling did you have?
- Describe what you liked or disliked about school.
- Describe how important was school for you.
- Using a scale 1-10 (1=not important, 10=very important) rank the importance of education.

2. Contributing (Protective) factors

- Describe what in your personal life helped you to finish school
- Describe the support received from your family (besides food and shelter) that helped you to finish school.
- Using a scale 1-10 (1=low, 10=high) rank the role of the family in your success.
- Describe (if any) the support received from the school that helped you to finish school.
- Using a scale 1-10 (1=not important, 10=very important) rank the importance of education.

3. Contributing (Risk) factors

- Describe what issues in your personal life have prevented you from graduating from school
- Describe what family issues (if any) contributed to not finishing school
- Describe in which way school had some responsibility (if any) for not finishing high school

4. Personal factors

- Describe how important education is/has been for you
- When you were in high school, was graduating/going to college one of your goals?
- Describe to what extent the idea of graduating was or was not a goal in your personal life
- Describe all personal factors (e.g. motivation, ability, income/money) that are/were contributing to your academic success
- To what extent do friends, role models have inspired you to strive to be successful in school?
- Please provide some recommendations/suggestions to other Latino students to help them to stay in school, graduate and continue with their college education
- Using a scale 1-10 (1=not important, 10=very important) rank the importance of school to your success.
5. Family factors

- Describe how important do you think that education is/has been for your family (immediate and extended family)
- Anyone in your family graduated from high school and graduated from college?
- Describe if graduating from high school/going to college, and graduating from college was an expectation from your family (one parent or both parents)
- What you think parents/families should do to ensure that students stay in school, graduate and continue with post-secondary education?

6. School factors

- Describe if you perceived that at the high school or in college that teachers and other staff had the expectation that you were (were not) capable of graduating
- Describe how the school (teachers, staff, curriculum, other activities) have contributed to your academic success
- To what extent the bilingual program (and the bilingual staff) has contributed to your success/non success in school? Explain.
- Describe any recommendations to improve bilingual services in the schools.
- To what extent you took advantage of the school opportunities (extracurricular activities, sports, after school tutoring, bilingual services) while you were at the high school/college?
- What recommendations/suggestions do you have for the schools that might help to keep Latino students in school, graduate and continue to college?

7. The Kalamazoo Promise

- How do you think that a college degree could benefit you?
- Do you know what the Kalamazoo Promise is? Explain
- When you were in high school, did your parents understand what the Promise is?
- Did counselor have helped you with the Promise or with information about other scholarships available?
- To what extent has the Kalamazoo Promise helped you?
- If you graduated before the Promise – How did you pay for your education?
- If you did not graduate – Do you believe that the outcome would be different in your life? Explain.
- If you graduated – Do you believe that the school prepared you adequately to move ahead in your life?
Appendix D

HSIRB Approval
Date: September 22, 2010

To: Brooks Applegate, Principal Investigator
    Manuel Brenes, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 10-07-24

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "Si Se Puede" – Latino Students Can Succeed in School: A Success Case Method Study" has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.
Approval Termination: September 22, 2011