PERCEPTIONS OF LATINO STUDENTS IN THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVERS

PROGRAM REGARDING NON-COGNITIVE FACTORS FOR COLLEGE

ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATION

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A Dissertation

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Doctor of Education

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by

Lisa Rodriguez Patenotte

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APPROVED:

Rebecca A. Robles-Piña, PhD
Dissertation Director

Cynthia Martinez Garcia, PhD
Committee Member

Nara Martirosyan, EdD
Committee Member

Stacey Edmonson, EdD
Dean, College of Education

DEDICATION

This study and all the blood, sweat, and tears I put into it is dedicated to my loving and patient family, including my husband, my mom, my grandmother, my sisters, brothers, and especially my nieces and nephews. I am grateful and blessed to be a part of such a supportive family. Your belief in me has always been far greater than my belief in myself and I thank you all for that. I am the woman I am today because of all of you.

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To my brothers and sisters, Annette, Paul, Rebeca, David, Lisa, and Angela, no words can express how thankful I am to you all. Annette, although your passing was

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ABSTRACT

Patenotte, Lisa Rodriguez, *Perceptions of Latino students in the Academic Achievers Program regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation.* Doctor of Education (Educational Leadership) December, 2016, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the Academic Achievers Program (AAP) regarding Non-Cognitive and Other Potential Factors for college enrollment and graduation. The participants for this study were purposefully selected from the populations of students that are currently enrolled in AAP and former students who completed the AAP.

Methodology

In this descriptive study, the researcher used the qualitative research methodology of hermeneutical phenomenology in order to understand the participants' perceptions and feelings about Non-Cognitive factors affecting their current and former participation in AAP. An initial survey was sent to 16 current and 8 former AAP participants ($n = 24$) to prepare them for the focus group interviews conducted at the Center for Mexican American Studies.

Findings

Analyses of the data yielded three categories and several themes. The following three categories were identified for Non-Cognitive factors: (a) Academic Services; (b) Social Integration/Welcoming Environment; and (c) Financial Aid Services. The themes for each category were determined through analysis of frequencies and percentages when responses yielded a 70%-100% positive response from both groups on the same question.

The themes that emerged under the Academic Services category included: (a) academic advising, (b) peer tutoring or other tutoring services, (c) opportunities to

connect with academic groups on campus, (d) opportunities for students to connect with family outside of class, and (e) full-time enrollment in college. Under the Social Integration/Welcoming Environment category, participants endorsed the theme of being provided with opportunities for social integration in a welcoming environment. Themes endorsed by participants under the Financial Aid Services category included: (a) connections on campus for jobs to meet financial needs and (b) the use of financial aid advisory services.

The following four categories of Other Potential Factors were identified: (a) Encouraged Enrollment; (b) Increased Participation in AAP; (c) Academic Challenges/Expectations; and (d) Cognitive and Personal Traits for Faculty. The theme for Encouraged Enrollment category included motivation /encouragement. The theme endorsed for Increased Participation in AAP category was sharing information. Under the Academic Challenges/Expectations category participants indicated the following themes: (a) provision of assignments that motivated classroom discussions, (b) provision of assignments that changed their point of view about a concept, and (c) provision of assignments that encouraged synthesis and organization of ideas in novel ways. Finally, concerning the themes for Cognitive and Personal Traits for Faculty category, participants stated that the professors were knowledgeable, exhibited positive attitudes, were fair, and respectful.

Conclusions

Based on responses from participants in this study, the resources and planning that take place in the AAP to address individual needs of participants influenced their positive reactions to questions regarding their perceptions of Non-Cognitive and Other Potential Factors. The researcher hopes that the findings of this study will serve as a tool

to support AAP mentors and directors in their decision-making efforts to provide

effective non-cognitive educational services to all under-served student populations.

KEY WORDS: Academic achievement, Academic Achievers Program, Center for
Mexican American Studies, Graduation, Enrollment, Latino students, Non-cognitive
factors, Other potential factors

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The focus of this study is the Academic Achievers Program (AAP). This program

was established in 1994 in an effort to enhance the academic performance of first time in

college (FTIC) Latino students at the University of Houston, main campus in Houston,

Texas. The AAP is an early intervention program designed to provide Latino students

from local high schools in the Houston area with knowledge, skills, and general college

preparation needed to enter and succeed in college (University of Houston Office of

Institutional Research, 2014). According to the University of Houston, Office of

Institutional Research, as of November 2014, 312 students have participated in the

program and 225 have earned their degrees, which yield a 72% completion rate. The

AAP at the University of Houston has helped participants financially, academically, and

even emotionally in terms of a support group (i.e., similar peer groups and caring staff)

(University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

The program is open to any student who meets the requirements. The following

criteria are given consideration when selecting AAP participants: (a) minimum 2.7 GPA,

(b) demonstrate scholastic achievement, (c) demonstrate financial needs, (d) must be first

in family to attend college, (e) involved in extracurricular community leadership

activities, (f) completed less than 66 credit hours, and (g) personal interview (University

of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). Students who are accepted into the

program are eligible to receive up to $3000 in scholarships each year. In return,

participants are required to: (a) enroll as a full-time student; (b) complete weekly

mandatory study hall hours; (c) attend workshops dealing with time management, study

skills, leadership development and career opportunities; (d) maintain a minimum 2.7 grade point average (GPA) each semester; (e) attend academic counseling; (f) attend monthly meetings; and (g) sign a contract agreeing to abide by the requirements of the program (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). The progress of each participant is monitored on a regular basis throughout each semester. In addition, participants visit job sites to learn about various job requirements and professional opportunities. Further, participants are encouraged not to work more than 20 hours per week (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

The findings of a 2013 survey revealed that the 6-year graduation rates for AAP participants were moderate (46%) at the University of Houston's main campus, however the 4-year graduation rates for AAP students were low (15%). Overall, including data since 1996, nearly 77% of the participants in AAP for undergraduate students earned their degrees within six years of entering the University of Houston (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). According to the University of Houston, Office of Institutional Research (2014), the AAP participants' 6-year graduation rate is higher than other Latino students at the University of Houston who do not participate in the AAP (36%) (Table 1) and higher than the overall graduation rate for all students who attend the University of Houston and do not participate in AAP (39%) (Table 1). The overall retention rate for students who participate in the AAP is higher than those students who do not participate in the AAP (Table 2).

Table 1

AAP and Latino Students Enrolled at University of Houston-Main Campus Graduation Rates

Years	2001	2002	2003	2004	2007
AAP Graduation Rate	55.0%	63.2%	73.3%	45.5%	55.0%
Latino Graduation Rate	39.3%	40.8%	36.1%	42.9%	41.1%

Note. The graduation rate is reported for 2001-2004 and 2007. The graduation and retention rates for first time in college students (FTIC) for 2005-2006 were too low to report (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

Table 2

AAP and Latino Students' Retention Rates

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2007
AAP Students					
Enrolled (Remained in College)	20.0%	15.8%	13.3%	22.7%	10.0%
Not Enrolled (Dropped Out)	25.0%	21%	14.0%	31.0%	35.0%
Latino Students					
Enrolled (Remained in College)	11.7%	10.1%	11.7%	10.6%	08.6%
Not Enrolled (Dropped out)	49.0%	49.1%	52.2%	46.5%	50.3%

Note. The six-year retention rates are reported for 2001-2004 and 2007. The retention rates for first time in college students (FTIC) for 2005-2006 were too low to report (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

In December 2013, a survey was given to AAP participants to document their views towards graduate school to determine the continued need for a workshop that was created for that topic and to monitor their academic progress. Forty-six out of seventy-three current AAP participants completed the survey (University of Houston Office of

Institutional Research, 2014). The demographics of AAP participants indicated that they were mostly female students at a junior level, employed part-time and their ages range between 18-23 years. Regarding importance of academic goals, the AAP participants rank ordered the following variables from very important to least important: (a) access to technology; (b) access to books that were needed for course assignments; (c) weekly tutoring; (d) academic counseling; and (e) leadership training. Interestingly, academic counseling and leadership training were rated with low importance for the AAP students.

The findings of the survey indicated that AAP participants are interested in graduate school however, they foresee barriers to pursuing an advanced degree such as lack of funds and the need to work. They also do not understand the additional steps needed to apply to graduate school. This information helped the facilitators of the AAP create workshops to prepare the AAP participants for graduate school (i.e., how to apply, research graduate programs, graduate record examination, etc.).

The AAP is part of the Center for Mexican American Studies' efforts to increase the number of first-generation, low-income, and mostly Latino students who graduate from college (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). The long-term goal of AAP is to continue propelling students towards college enrollment and college graduation through scholarship awards and research based practices such as tutoring, mentoring, and leadership training (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). This study involved an examination of the perceptions of current and former student participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive and other potential factors that may lead to college enrollment and graduation for AAP participants.

Non-cognitive factors are identified in the literature as predictors by Hein, Smerdon, and Sambolt (2013). Non-cognitive factors are measures that are strongly correlated with improved postsecondary outcomes but for which a numeric threshold has not been established (Hein, Smerdon, & Sambolt, 2013). Other potential factors are skills and attributes that have been identified as important to students' success and are driven by sound theoretical arguments (e.g., collaborative skills that are important for future success) but for which reliable metrics have not yet been developed or tested independently of other factors (Hein, Smerdon, & Sambolt, 2013). These non-cognitive and other potential factors may be utilized in addition to current data collected to provide insight regarding what strategies really work with recruitment and retention of students in the AAP. The current data collected include GPA, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, graduation rates in four to six years, survey items regarding importance of academic goals, graduate school interest, AAP staff evaluations, and open-ended questions with suggestions to improve the decline in the number of high school students that participate in and complete the AAP through college graduation. In this first chapter, the researcher presented a brief overview of the literature pertaining to (a) introduction; (b) background of the study; (c) statement of the problem; (d) statement of the purpose and significance; (e) research questions; (f) definition of terms; (g) theoretical framework; (h) limitations; (i) delimitations; (j) assumptions; and (k) organization of the study.

Background of the Study

Creating conditions that support college graduation among Latino students has never been more important. As many as four-fifths of high school graduates need some

form of postsecondary education to prepare them to live an economically self-sufficient life and to deal with the increasingly complex social, political, and cultural issues they will face (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010; Jerald, 2009). College graduates on average earn almost a million dollars more over the course of their working lives than those with only a high school diploma (Pennington, 2004). Therefore, it is imperative that more Latinos graduate from high school, enroll in college, and graduate.

According to Lopez and Fry (2013), Latino students' college enrollment rates surpassed that of White students' college enrollment in 2012. However, because Latino dropout rates continue to outnumber White students' dropout rates, Latinos make up only 19% of all college students ages 18 to 24 (Lopez & Fry, 2013). Furthermore, in 2012, only 14.5% of Latinos earned a bachelor's degree compared to 34.5% of White students and 21.2% of African American students (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). If current trends continue in the production of bachelor's degrees, a 14 million shortfall of college-educated working adults is predicted by the year 2020 (Bidwell, 2013). Recruitment and retention of all citizens to institutions of higher education is vital to the future of individual students as well as the future of our nation (Cabrera, Burkum, & La Nasa, 2005; Handel & Montoya, 2012).

The Current State of Education in Texas

Texas has made substantial educational progress recently but still has a long way to go. For example, Texas has become increasingly engaged in a global economy dependent on skilled and knowledgeable workers; most of those workers must come from higher education. Although Texas is improving at increasing college completions for students from groups (i.e.: African American and Latino) who traditionally have not

earned certificates or degrees in large numbers, the state has not improved quickly or broadly enough to keep up with changes in demographics. Completions in higher education in Texas must reflect the population as a whole (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015). In 2015, the race/ethnic distribution of projected Texas population, ages 25-34 is 43% Latino; 39% White; 12% African American; and 6% Other. In 2030, the race/ethnic distribution of projected Texas population, ages 25-34 will be Latino 52%; White 29%; African American 11%; and Other 8% (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015).

Because of the importance of higher education, Texans have united around the goals of the previous statewide plan, Closing the Gaps by 2015 (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015). Over a 15-year period, beginning in 2000, the Legislature established and funded new higher education institutions, appropriated $3.3 billion for Texas grants to help low income students attend college and increased funding for programs for critical fields. Institutions of higher education in the state responded by increasing access and improving completions. In 2014 they enrolled more than 1.6 million students, an increase of almost 600,000 since 2000. The institutions also awarded almost 250,000 bachelor's degrees, associate's degrees, and certificates, 130,000 more than in 2000 (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015, p. iv).

Due to the success of the previous programs, Texas has implemented another bold new higher education plan, 60x30TX (60 by 30 Texas) (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015). The 60x30TX plan focuses on striving for 60% of the 25-to 34-year old Texas population to hold a certificate or degree by 2030. The plan seeks to increase student success through the combined expertise and resources of many

stakeholders. The 60x30TX higher education strategic plan consists of four broad goals (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015).

The first goal in the plan aims to increase the percentage of 25-to 34-year olds in Texas who hold a certificate or degree (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015). The goal focuses on 25-to 34-year olds as an indicator of the economic future of the state and its ability to remain globally competitive, the state's large population makes the Texas economy similar in size to that of many countries. Within this global context, the state has seen a relative decline in educational completion among this population (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015). The second goal in the plan is to have at least 550,000 students complete a certificate, associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree from a Texas higher education institution by 2030 (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015). The third goal in the plan is to have all Texas graduates of higher education institutions complete an academic program with marketable skills. Students need to be aware of the marketable skills embedded in their academic programs, and institutions must make certain that students graduate with marketable skills (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015). The fourth goal relates to student debt. By the year 2030 undergraduate student loan debt will not exceed 60% of first year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015).

The graduation reports for Texas fiscal years from 2004-2014 show that only about 10% of the poorest eighth grade students in Texas attain a postsecondary credential when tracked for 11 years. Economic disadvantage is the best indicator in determining an individual's likelihood of attaining education past high school. For the state to remain

competitive in the future, the state's two-and four-year colleges will need to make substantial efforts to reach out to students from all backgrounds.

Anthony Carnevale (2013) stated that a majority of future jobs in the nation and in the state will require a postsecondary credential. Carnevale, (2013) asserted that as early as 2020, "fewer jobs will be available to people with less than a high school or only a high school diploma" (p. 19). This is important because of the state's shift in demographics. The 25-to 34-year old population, the target group of the 60x30TX, is projected to grow 41% among Latinos between 2015 and 2030. Although the state has made strides among Latino Texans, poverty among this population has increased, especially among those with lower levels of education (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015).

The likelihood of achieving a postsecondary degree in Texas, as in other states, is statistically linked to ethnicity (Baum, Ma, & Pavea, 2013). In many urban school districts, ninth-graders, especially economically disadvantaged Latino students, have only a 50% chance of graduating from high school (Baum et al., 2013). At current rates of success, a Latino seventh grade public school student has a less than 10% probability of earning a bachelor's degree (Baum et al., 2013).

Furthermore, inadequate preparation and lack of effective academic support for under-prepared college students contribute to low percentages of college graduates (Abele, 2014). According to Abele (2014), only 18% of Texas high school graduates are prepared to do rigorous college work across all disciplines. Carnevale, Smith, and Strohl, (2013) predicted by the year 2020, two-thirds of jobs will require college experience, with at least 30% of those jobs requiring a bachelor's degree.

Another contributing factor to low percentages of students graduating from college is the rising cost of higher education (Faulkner, 2015). Only 38% of economically disadvantaged high school students enroll in college compared to 55% of students from families with greater resources (Faulkner, 2015). Historically, Texas has been a low-cost state, but with increases in tuition and fees of over 50% since 2000, higher education costs in Texas are close to the national average (Faulkner, 2015). What is challenging for Texas is that family income is well below the national average, and state financial aid lags well behind that of other large states (Faulkner, 2015).

Dr. Raymund Paredes, Commissioner of Higher Education stated that, "In order to improve "The Number," "Texas must become a national center of innovation in higher education, with the primary goals of improving student success and employability and holding down costs to both students and the state" (Texas Higher Education Almanac, 2014, p. 5). To do this, Dr. Paredes suggested that, "expansion in both online and blended instruction and competency-based programs that advance students toward credentials based on mastery of subject matter, not time in class must occur" (Texas Higher Education Almanac, 2014, p. 5). Dr. Paredes believes that, "colleges and universities should work more closely with the business sector to increase the availability of paid internships that not only provide relevant workforce experience but carry academic credit" (Texas Higher Education Almanac, 2014, p. 6). Also, Dr. Paredes recommended, a statewide, cross-curricular, marketable skills initiative that ensures all college and university graduates will have skills that employers seek, whether they major in business or philosophy (Texas Higher Education Almanac, 2014). Finally, Dr. Paredes challenged university presidents to "encourage college and university faculty to lead the

way toward innovation by rewarding them through the tenure and promotion system for

distinguished-and measurable-achievement not only in research but in teaching and

service" (Texas Higher Education Almanac, 2014, p. 6).

Rapid Growth of the Latino Population

Verdugo (2006) conducted a study, *Status of Hispanics in Education*, in which he

reported that the Latino population is the fastest growing in the nation. Latinos were the

second largest racial/ethnic group in the United States. In 2012, Latinos were 17% of the

total United States population (53 million), while Whites were 63% (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2013). The Latino population is projected to increase. By 2060,

Latinos are projected to represent 31% of the total United States population (129 million),

while Whites are projected to represent 43% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

The Latino population is significantly younger than the majority. In 2013, the

median age for Latinos was 28 compared to 43 for non-Hispanic Whites (U.S. Census

Bureau, 2013). The majority of Latinos in the United States are of Mexican descent. In

2012, 64% of Latinos were of Mexican descent, 9% Puerto Rican, 8% Central American,

6% South American, 3% Cuban, and 9% from other places of origin (U.S. Census

Bureau, 2012). Latino children were more likely to live in poverty, along with African

Americans, than others. In 2012, 33% of Latino families with children under 18 lived

below the poverty level, compared to 39% of African American families, 14% of Asian

families, and 13% of White families (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

Latino representation in K-12 education has grown nationally. In 2011, Latinos

represented 24% of public school enrollment and are projected to represent 30% by 2023

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Latino representation in K-12 education

was largest in the Western and Southern regions of the United States. In 2011, Latinos

represented 41% of K-12 student enrollment in the West and 23% of K-12 enrollment in

the South. Latinos represented 11% of K-12 students in the Midwest and 18% in the

Northeast (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). In 2012, Latino students

represented 16% of undergraduate students, while Whites were 58% (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2013).

Education of Latinos and the Economy

Latinos in the labor force had lower levels of college graduation compared to

other groups. Of those in the labor force, 18% of Latinos earned a bachelor's degree or

higher, compared to Asians (59%), Whites (37%), and African Americans (27%) (U.S.

Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). Furthermore, Latinos had higher labor force

participation compared to other groups. In 2013, 66% of Latinos 16 years and older

participated in the labor force, compared to 65% of Asians, 64% of Whites, and 61% of

African Americans (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). However, the median

weekly earnings of Latinos were lower than that of other groups. In 2013, the weekly

median earnings for Latinos were $578, compared to Asians ($942), Whites ($802), and

African Americans ($629) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013).

Latinos represented significantly less of those employed in the highest paying

occupations than other groups (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). In 2013, Latinos

represented 20% of management, professional, and related occupations, compared to

Asians (50%), Whites (39%), and African Americans (29%) (U.S. Bureau of Labor

Statistics, 2013). In contrast, Latinos were significantly overrepresented in lower paying

service occupations. In 2013, Latinos represented 50% of agricultural workers, 45% of

grounds maintenance workers, and 44% of housekeeping workers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013).

The link between education and prosperity is undisputed. These individuals need quality education not only to contribute to the economy of the United States, but also to provide direction to their children to grow as productive citizens. The window of opportunity (10-15 years) for successfully educating this population is narrowing (The College Board, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

The problem that this study addressed included two parts, specifically: (a) the program that is the focus of this study, the AAP, has experienced a decline in the number of high school students that participate in and complete the program through college graduation based on a review of program data on graduation and retention for 2001-2004 and 2007 (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014) and (b) the current data used to evaluate the program does not include measures identified in the literature as non-cognitive and other potential factors (Hein, Smerdon, & Sambolt, 2013). Non-cognitive factors are measures that are strongly correlated with improved postsecondary outcomes but for which a numeric threshold has not been established (Hein et al., 2013). Other potential factors are skills and attributes that have been identified as important to students' success and are driven by sound theoretical arguments (e.g., collaborative skills that are important for future success) but for which reliable metrics have not yet been developed or tested independently of other factors (Hein et al., 2013). Numerous programs are implemented in Texas and across the nation with the goals to recruit and provide support for Latino students to enroll in college and obtain an

undergraduate degree, however low percentages of Latino students who reach the goals continue to exist (Santiago, Galdeano & Taylor, 2015; Gándara, 1999; Gándara, 2010; Santiago & Soliz, 2012). Given demographic trends in Texas, special emphasis must be placed on Latino student participation in higher education and graduation (Handel & Montoya, 2012).

College enrollment and degree attainment for Latino students remain considerably lower than those of White, African American, and Asian students (Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015). In 2014, the undergraduate graduation rates for Latino students was 14% in public four-year universities; 10% in private non-profit four-year universities; and 15% in private for-profit four-year universities. In the same year, the graduation rate for Latino students was 9% in public four-year universities; and 8% for private non-profit and private for-profit four-year universities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015a). Furthermore, Santiago and Soliz (2012) reported only 21% of Latinos had earned an associate's degree or higher in comparison to 44% of White and 30% of African American students.

Statement of the Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation. In addition, the researcher explored the current and former participants' perceptions regarding other potential factors they believed, if appropriately addressed will increase the participation in the AAP of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area. The previous data collected provided insights regarding the effectiveness of the program as it relates to students' academic progress

(i.e., GPA, SAT scores, and graduation rates in four to six years, survey items regarding importance of academic goals, graduate school interest, AAP staff evaluation, and open-ended suggestions to improving AAP) (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). While a small section of the data collected showed that AAP participants viewed access to technology; access to books that were needed for course assignments; weekly tutoring; academic counseling; and leadership training as important factors that would contribute to their success in college, there is still a need to continue to ask participants questions that directly pertain to non-cognitive and other potential factors (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). There is a need to continue to document evidence that non-cognitive and other potential factors make a difference in the percentage of Latino students who graduate from institutions of higher education.

To understand the lived experiences of the current and former participants in the AAP, one must see it, hear about it, and make meaning of it from the perspectives of those who know it well (Smyth & Hattam, 2001). Listening to the voices of participants' regarding their lived experiences in the AAP provided information that will impact how students are recruited to participate in the program and increase the number of students that participate; provide information regarding non-cognitive and other potential factors (Hein, Smerdon, & Sambolt, 2013) for undergraduate college entry and graduation among Latino students; lead to an increased number of participants that complete the program from high school through undergraduate graduation; and provide support for making a case for continued funding of the program. Furthermore, it is important to continue studying and evaluating the effectiveness of programs geared towards increasing

the college completion rates of Latino students because of the future impact on the

economy of the United States and Texas by this fast growing population as documented

by several studies (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010, 2013; Sirin, 2005; St. John,

Cabrera, Nora, & Asker, 2000). It is expected that educational work in Texas will have

profound ramifications nationally, because in many ways, the demographic trends in

Texas predetermine those in many other states (THECB, 2008). As Dr. Steve Murdock,

the former state demographer of Texas and now the director of the U. S. Census Bureau

stated: "As Texas goes, so goes the nation" (THECB, 2008, p.1).

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Research Questions

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Boeree (2002) noted that the phenomena speak for themselves, meaning the

researcher should be prepared to listen. In this study, the researcher described the

perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive

and other potential factors for college enrollment and graduation as they actually appear

to the participants--free of the researcher's biases and beliefs as supported by the work of

Gall, Gall, and Borg (2006).

1. What are the perceptions of current Latino participants in the AAP regarding

non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation?

2. What are the perceptions of former Latino participants in the AAP regarding

non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation?

3. What are the perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP

regarding other potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed will increase the

participation in the AAP; college enrollment; and graduation of low income, first

generation high school Latino students in the Houston area?

Definition of Terms

Academic Achievers Program

Program implemented at the University of Houston Main Campus in Houston, Texas since 1989 is part of the Center for Mexican American Studies' efforts to increase the number of first-generation, low-income, and mostly Latino students who graduate from college (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). The long-term goal of the AAP is to continue propelling students towards college enrollment and college graduation through scholarship awards and research based practices such as tutoring, mentoring, and leadership training (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

First Generation Students

Students attending college whose parents have not completed a baccalaureate education or only have some college experience (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)

Critical mass theory suggests once a definable group reaches a certain size within an organization, group interactions transform the organization's culture. While the size of the definable group required for organizational change varies, the enrollment size selected to define HSIs in federal legislation is at least 25% Latino undergraduate full-time equivalent enrollment (Excelencia in Education, 2014; Title V of the Higher Education Act, 2008).

Latino

Individuals that self- identify as Latino and include Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, and other Latino origins (Pew Research Center, 2009).

Lived Experiences

The academic and social experiences that students encounter in high school, college entry, and degree attainment (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013).

Non-Cognitive Factors

Measures that are strongly correlated with improved postsecondary outcomes but for which a numeric threshold has not been established (Hein et al., 2013)

Other Potential Factors

Skills and attributes that have been identified as important to students' success and are driven by sound theoretical arguments (e.g., collaborative skills are important for future success) but for which reliable metrics have not yet been developed or tested independently of other factors (Hein et al., 2013).

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)

An agency that will promote access to quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access is unacceptable. The THECB will be open, ethical, responsive, and committed to public service. The THECB will approach its work with a sense of purpose and responsibility to the people of Texas and is committed to the best use of public monies. The Coordinating Board will engage in actions that add value to Texas and to higher education (THECB, 2008).

Undergraduate Graduation

Completion of an undergraduate college bachelor's degree program within the traditional four-to-six-year time frame (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

Underrepresented Student Populations

Student populations that are traditionally underrepresented in the college environment, usually by ethnicity and race (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study was based on research by Amaury Nora and Gloria Crisp (2012) in which they make the argument that more diverse perspectives are needed to examine Latino students' success in higher education. There is a plethora of research demonstrating that college is not experienced by all students in the same way and does not have the same impact on all students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Nora and Crisp (2012) support Zurita's (2004) call for researchers to allow Latino students to tell about their own college experiences, to provide a rich description of students' experiences and perceptions specific to the college environment. The researchers, Nora and Crisp (2012), believe that there is a need to incorporate non-cognitive (e.g., psychological, social, cultural) measures in databases rather than simply focusing on cognitive success outcomes (e.g., grades, retention rates, and graduation counts) (Nora & Crisp, 2012). Chen and Des Jardins (2010) suggested that, longitudinal datasets would be improved by providing full information for observable and measurable variables that may change over time (e.g., family income, GPA, parental support). According to Nora and Crisp (2012), the cognition-related outcomes do not occur in isolation of student attitudes, their values and perceptions, and their academic and social behavior on- and off-campus (Nora & Crisp, 2012).

The diverse perspectives that the authors refer to are defined by what they call a race sensitive theoretical framework to guide research on Latino students in higher education (Nora & Crisp, 2009). The components of the race sensitive theoretical framework include (Nora & Crisp, 2012): (a) interaction of the internal as well as the external environments on college campuses and their surrounding communities; (b) re-conceptualizing student success by broadening definitions of student success that are currently focused on cognitive outcomes; (c) infusing cultural sensitivity in theoretical frameworks. Research on Latino students has begun to consider criterion measures that better reflect Latino cultures and/or the experiences of diverse groups (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Quintana, Vogel, & Ybarra, 1991); and (d) diversifying perspectives of culturally-relevant theory more identifiable to Latino students through psychological, social, cultural, and environmental perspectives.

Interaction of Internal and External Environments

The importance of the different aspects of a campus climate cannot be underestimated, but it should not be considered before the importance of the environment external to the campus. Prior research has found that environmental factors constitute perceived barriers to full academic and social integration on campus for Latino students (Nora & Crisp, 2009). Both the academic environment and its surrounding communities include such indicators as financial circumstances imposed on the family when students must borrow money or depend on financial aid to offset college costs or when Latino students must depend on off-campus work. Terenzini and Pascarella (1984) focused on the influence that living on campus would play in retaining college students but no studies have comparatively examined the differences in the lives of students of color

living on campus versus commuting to college. Even though the researchers also focused on the importance of student/faculty interactions in the classroom, they did not focus on classroom instruction among different racial/ethnic groups (Nora & Crisp, 2012). In addition, environmental issues related to a student's sense of community, campus support programs, perceived discriminatory behaviors, and policy and politics by the state and the institution have not been considered seriously along with other variables often used in studying the success of Latino students' college enrollment and degree attainment (Nora & Crisp, 2012).

Re-defining Student Success. Research on Latino students would be enhanced by a broadening of current definitions of student success that are focused on cognitive outcomes. The current definitions of student success focused on cognitive outcomes may have different conceptual meanings among different racial/cultural student populations (Nora & Crisp, 2012). The frameworks to define student success should include psychological and behavioral outcomes (Nora & Crisp, 2012). For example, student satisfaction, a measure of overall gratification, can be viewed as the culmination of the academic and social experiences that students are subjected to while attending college, thereby representing the outcome of the interactions among students, faculty, peers, and their environments (Nora & Crisp, 2012).

In addition, success should not solely represent an individual benefit. Giving back to society and engaging in the betterment of that society can also be considered as a gauge of student success as well as that of an institution. The desire to be an active participant in the larger community has recently entered into the discussion of what constitutes student success (Nora & Crisp, 2012).

Integrating Cultural Sensitivity in Theoretical Framework. Research on Latino students' enrollment in college and degree attainment can be enhanced by taking a more environmental approach that allows for indicators of support from other persons in the student's life, such as family, faculty, and peers (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005) and by focus on the access and conversion of various forms of social and cultural capital. Furthermore, research specific to Latino students would be enhanced by the development of theoretical models that account for the local context that may influence the knowledge and/or support that students need to succeed at a particular institution (Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, & Trevino, 1997). Research on minority students has depended primarily on the use of existing databases, making it necessary to rely on ethnocentric definitions and conceptualizations of variables. Rendon, Novack, and Dowell (2005), Tierney (1993), and others have criticized the use of current theoretical models to study racial/ethnic student groups. Arguments on this issue center on the inappropriateness of variables to capture the complex differences, culturally and ethnically, of Latino, African American, and Asian American students. A good example is the incorporation of academic and social integration in current frameworks on student persistence. The issue is not whether those constructs are functional for all groups, but rather how the measurement of those constructs can capture the cultural and ethnic differences of all groups (e.g., how different groups socially integrate themselves on campus) (Nora & Crisp, 2012). "More elaborate theoretically-driven perspectives that truly capture the experiences of minority students are still needed as well as the re-measurement (quantitatively) of established variables in current models" (Nora & Crisp, 2012, p. 14).

Diversifying Perspective of Culturally-Relevant Theory. From both conceptual and methodological points of view, investigative efforts in education and in the fields of psychology, anthropology, and sociology are changing the manner in which we conceptualize different observable facts and the way we select empirical tools to guide our observations and investigations (Hurtado, 1997; Rosaldo, 1989). Higher education cannot afford to remain entrenched in traditional and inappropriate theoretical frameworks in future studies of Latino students (Nora & Crisp, 2012). Newer models informed by a variety of disciplines and points of view, as well as theory refinements to existing frameworks, are needed that consider the central theoretical issues associated with the specific experiences of Latino students in higher education (Nora & Crisp, 2012). In summary, the theoretical framework for this study based on the research by Nora and Crisp (2012) is important because they argue that more diverse perspectives are needed to examine Latino students' success in higher education. The previous data collected provided insights regarding the effectiveness of the program as it relates to students' academic progress (i.e., GPA, SAT scores, and graduation rates in four to six years, survey items regarding importance of academic goals, graduate school interest, AAP staff evaluation, and open-ended suggestions to improving AAP) (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). While a small section of the data collected showed that AAP participants viewed access to technology; access to books that were needed for course assignments; weekly tutoring; academic counseling; and leadership training as important factors that would contribute to their success in college, there is still a need to continue to ask participants questions that directly pertain to non-cognitive and other potential factors (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). There is a need to continue to document evidence that non-cognitive

and other potential factors make a difference in the percentage of Latino students who graduate from institutions of higher education.

Limitations

Limitations in research are matters and occurrences that arise in the study, which are out of the researcher's control. The limitations of this study included the following:

1. The survey used for self-reporting may not determine conclusively the perceptions of current and former Latino student participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation. This limitation may be a factor because the participants are/were enrolled in a single program at a four-year university in a single geographic location. Latino students in other regions of the nation may have different perceptions of non-cognitive and other potential factors for college enrollment and graduation based on their individual circumstances and life experiences.

2. The measures of non-cognitive and other potential factors included in this study have not been directly linked to postsecondary success. Instead, the measures have been linked to proximal academic success (Hein et al., 2013).

3. There is very little research that focuses specifically on special student populations, such as English language learners, students with disabilities, and private or home schooled students regarding non-cognitive and other potential factors (Kearns, Kleinert, Sheppard-Jones, Hall, & Jones, 2011). The researcher believes that low income, high school, Latino students, which is the only racial group included in this study fit into the description of special student population.

Delimitations

Delimitations of a study are those characteristics that arise from the limitations in the scope of the study (boundaries are defined by the researcher) by conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions made during the development of the study. Delimitations of this study included the following:

1. The participants in this study were selected from current and former Latino student participants in the Academic Achievers Program (AAP).

2. The survey that was used in this study was a self-report measure and no observable practices were examined.

3. The sample of Latino student participants in the AAP may not be representative of the general population of Latino students enrolled at the selected university campus.

Assumptions

Three general assumptions of this study were:

1. The survey used in this study was valid for the purpose intended.

2. The participants understood the survey and responded objectively and honestly.

3. Interpretation of the data collected reflected what participants intended.

Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter I includes introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, statement of the purpose and significance, research questions, definition of terms, theoretical framework, limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and organization of the study. In Chapter II, the researcher

provides a review of the literature including: (a) introduction; (b) theories regarding Latino college students' retention; (c) non-cognitive and other potential factors impacting Latino students' college enrollment and graduation; (d) institutional practices to support undergraduate graduation; (e) the state of education for Latinos; and (f) programs that work for Latino students in higher education; (g) summary. In Chapter III, the researcher describes the methodology used in this study, which includes research design, participants, context and setting, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. In Chapter IV, the researcher provided findings of the study. In Chapter V, the researcher provided discussions, implications, recommendations, and conclusions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The future of the nation is intricately linked to the future of the Latino community. Latinos are the largest, youngest, and fastest-growing minority group, and will represent 70% of our nation's population growth between 2015 and 2060 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2013). Latino educational attainment is not about ethnicity; it is increasingly about demographics, economics, and the workforce (Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015). The Latino community holds the key to President Obama's 2020 goal of once again having the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world. To achieve this goal, Latinos will need to earn 3.5 million more degrees by 2020 (Santiago & Galdeano, 2014).

During the Obama administration's first term, college enrollment among Latinos reached a record high and continues to increase (Ceja, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The college enrollment rate for Latinos increased from 54% to 70%, resulting in a higher rate of Latino students enrolling directly after their high school graduation than White or African American students. Additionally, Latinos increased bachelor's degree attainment in the last 10 years. In 2013, 3.1 million Latinos had earned a bachelor's degree as their highest degree earned. This was a 63% increase from the 1.9 million Latinos who held a bachelor's degree in 2004 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). While these are promising trends, there is still much work to do. Our nation must do more to develop and maintain systems that will allow Latino youth and future generations to complete college.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation. In addition, the researcher explored the current and former participants' perceptions regarding other potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed would increase the participation in the AAP of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area. The previous data collected provided insights regarding the effectiveness of the program as it relates to students' academic progress (i.e.: GPA, SAT scores, and graduation rates in four to six years, survey items regarding importance of academic goals, graduate school interest, AAP staff evaluation, and open-ended suggestions to improving AAP) (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). While a small section of the data collected showed that AAP participants viewed access to technology; access to books that were needed for course assignments; weekly tutoring; academic counseling; and leadership training as important factors that would contribute to their success in college, there is still a need to continue to ask participants questions that directly pertain to non-cognitive and other potential factors (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). There is a need to continue to document evidence that non-cognitive and other potential factors make a difference in the percentage of Latino students who graduate from institutions of higher education. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of current Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation?

2. What are the perceptions of former Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation?

3. What are the perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP perceptions regarding other potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed will increase the participation in the AAP; college enrollment; and graduation of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area?

In addition, the researcher discussed information from studies that confirm non-cognitive and other potential factors regarding undergraduate college enrollment and graduation. To support research and theories regarding non-cognitive and other potential factors for success in postsecondary education and address the research questions, several topics are discussed in the following sections of this chapter. The topics include: (a) theories regarding Latino college students' retention in higher education; (b) psycho-social constructs leading to Latino students' college success; (c) non-cognitive and other potential factors impacting Latino students' college enrollment and graduation; (d) institutional practices to support undergraduate graduation; and (e) the state of education for Latinos.

Theories Regarding Latino Students' College Retention

Many of the programs, practices, and strategies implemented to retain students in college and university programs are supported by theories on the topic. In the following paragraphs, theories on retention of students in higher education institutions are discussed. Tinto's *Social Inclusion Theory* (1987), seminal by Astin (1993), and Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates (2005), emphasized procedures, programs, school climate, and culture, and above all, steady, dependable, and positive human interaction as key features leading to student retention. In the following paragraphs, the works of these researchers are discussed in detail.

Tinto's Theories

Tinto's early work, a large, national, longitudinal study, presents a widely cited theoretical model of college student persistence and attrition, featuring several salient constituent elements (Metz, 2002). These included characteristics of students such as "family, background, and pre-college instruction present prior to college entry; students' aspirations and goals; students' involvement and integration (academic as well as social) in college; and students' educational outcomes, such as dropping out, graduation, or transfer" (Metz, 2002, p. 5). Tinto's theory "suggested students arrive at college with certain expectations and aspirations; the integration or lack thereof, into college environment, affected students' outcomes" (Metz, 2002, p. 6).

In later work, Tinto (1987) spoke to the unique situation of two-year college students; these students commute, and many of them are employed full-time. Therefore, their opportunities for the traditional types of involvement typically associated with four-year institutions are diminished. As the theory developed to include non-traditional or underserved populations, Tinto pointed to special considerations affecting retention for "high-risk" students, including minority status, inadequate high school preparation, and low socioeconomic level (Tinto, 1987). Tinto cited institutional activities, including orientation and transition programs, small learning communities, and first-year courses which may help inhibit early departure from colleges and universities even for non-traditional and underserved students whose non-academic responsibilities often keep them from traditional types of involvement in college (Tinto, 1987). Latino students meet the criteria above, they may be classified as high-risk students; they belong to an underserved population; they frequently enter postsecondary education at the community

college level; and they typically exhibit numerous factors that militate against their

academic achievement (Fry, 2002).

Astin's Theory

Astin (1993) provided extensive quantitative data, again from national

longitudinal studies, as evidence that certain key features of academic institutions, as well

as of the students themselves, keep students in school. Particularly, relevant to the Latino

university population is Astin's discussion of diversity orientation. Astin (1993) posited,

"the fact that campus diversity orientation is negatively associated with leaving school or

transferring suggests that enhancing the institutional emphasis on diversity may be one

further way of increasing retention rates" (p. 300).

Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whit, and Associates Theory

Similar to Astin's orientation, George Kuh's work emphasizes the role of student

engagement in student success (Kuh et al., 2005). In his coauthored book, *Student*

Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter, he and his associates depict major

policies and practices coming from a two-year study (called Documenting Effective

Educational Practices (DEEP) Project) of 20 strong-performing colleges and universities

all of which represent higher than predicted student engagement as indicated by student

responses on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and higher than

predicted graduation rates (Kuh et al., 2005). The results of the study suggest that DEEP

schools all clearly articulate expectations of success and demonstrate to students how to

take advantage of institutional resources and have acculturation processes in place. They

also have events to connect students with peers, faculty, and staff and to communicate

what is valued and how things are done. They align resources, policies, and practices

with the institutional mission and purpose. Further, they represent the cultural norm of the continuous process of innovation and "ethic of positive restlessness" or "improvement-oriented ethos" (Kuh et al., 2005; Whitt, Kinzie, Schuh, & Kuh, 2008). In other words, based on this investigation, the researchers theorized that innovative, inclusive academic practices, such as learner-centered instruction, as well as inclusive attitudinal features that characterize Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), help historically underserved students to persist and succeed. This conclusion theory is consistent with the retention theories.

Rendon's Theory

Rendon's (1994) *Validation Theory* posited that personal qualities and attitudes, as well as interactions, conditions, and alliances must be present in order for Latino students to persist, especially when they are the first generation in their families to attend college. Self-doubt among non-traditional students indicates a need for validation, according to Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft, Millar, Allison, and Gregg (1994). Validation may occur in class, out of class, from family, peers, faculty, and staff. For non-traditional students attending college self-affirmation, the valuing by college instructors of both the students' life experiences prior to education, as well as instructors' time, interest and energy all lead to "a sense of obligation to succeed" (Terenzini et al., 1994, p. 67) on the part of the students. In addition to the key factors described in the retention theories, psycho-social constructs impact students' retention in school. In the next section, the researcher addresses psycho-social constructs of Latino students' college success.

Psycho-Social Constructs Leading to Latino Students' College Success

In addition to academic, cultural, historical, economic, and institutional factors that may contribute to or detract from students' success, personal psychological factors may feature prominently in considerations of retention and attrition, particularly for Latino students (Fry, 2002). Familial expectations and responsibilities, expectations of Latino culture that differ from that of the majority culture, and minority status itself all conspire to an additional layer of psychological adjustment for Latino college students over and above that which the average non-Latino college student has to deal with (Rendon, 1992). For example, males are often expected to contribute to the family's finances (Fry, 2002), and females may be required to help with housework and childcare (Rendon, 1992), further separating their experience from that of their non-Latino peers.

Latino students who feel discriminated against, whether overtly, or simply due to subtle but perceived lack of inclusion, are less likely to feel the attachment to the institution believed necessary to foster academic success (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996). Hurtado et al. (1996) recommended that ethnically diverse students engage in inter-group dialog to help work through mutual hard feelings and misperceptions. These researchers also mentioned successful time, money, and schedule management, as well as familiarity with the "physical, social, and cognitive geographies on campus" as critical elements to Latino student success (Hurtado et al., 1996, p. 152). Hurtado et al. (1996) examined psychological adjustment problems among Latino college students resulting from racism; Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) pointed out inequities in education along racial and ethnic lines and also cited the destructive psychological consequences of racism.

In addition, like Atkinson (1998), Hurtado et al. (1996), Ladson-Billings and Tate, (1995) and Solorzano, Villalpondo, & Oseguera (2005) suggested the importance for underserved students to share their experiences and feelings. They argued that there are three key reasons for "naming one's own reality" and telling one's own story (as a way to counteract the deleterious effects of racism). According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) the reasons cited for telling one's own story are as follows:

1. individual stories are "imperative structures" that impose order on the reality of the storyteller;

2. stories assist with "psychic preservation of marginalized groups"; and

3. stories can prompt members of hegemonic groups to examine, own, and hopefully change power imbalances for members of minority or individuals with lower economic status. (p. 48)

As important as telling one's own story, according to Atkinson (1998), Bertaux (1981), Chase (1995) and Josselson (1995), validation is also considered a salient key to minority student persistence and success. Hurtado et al. (1996) and Terenzini et al. (1994) identified pride resulting from validation as a key element in Latino students' success. The researchers also cited self-reliance and discipline as inhibitors to Latino student attrition.

In addition to the empowerment that comes from validation, self-reliance, discipline, etc., the academic success among underserved students results from adequate social support, use of coping mechanisms, high expectations of efficacy, and the students' own psychological resiliency (Winfield, 1994). Resiliency is defined as "positive coping, persistence, adaptation, and long-term success despite adverse

circumstances" (Winfield, 1994, p. 1). Moreover, Winfield mentioned, the findings of researchers cited earlier (Hurtado et al., 1996; Terenzini et al., 1994), regarding the importance of "an internal locus of control" (Winfield, 1994, p. 1) as an inhibitor of attrition and a promoter of student academic achievement.

The theories discussed in this section of the review of literature provide evidence that factors that are characterized as non-cognitive and other potential factors do indeed directly or indirectly impact college enrollment and graduation of students in general and therefore impact the enrollment and graduation of Latino participants in the AAP. These factors include connections with peers, staff, and professors at the university; how to use institutional resources; validation of self; attitudes and interactions with others on the campus; diversity orientation; the culture and climate on the university campus. These factors are different from the traditional factors that are usually considered, e.g., SAT scores; GPA; interest in graduate school; etc. The factors addressed in the theories support the theoretical framework of this study based on research by Amaury Nora and Gloria Crisp (2012) in which they make the argument that more diverse perspectives are needed to examine Latino students' success in higher education.

Non-Cognitive and Other Potential Factors Impacting Latino Students' College Enrollment and Graduation

Many variables impact the persistence and success of Latino students' regarding undergraduate college graduation. Due to these variables it is important for educators in pre-school, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educational institutions to be able to recognize non-cognitive and other potential factors which substantially impact students' college graduation. Research on benchmarks for postsecondary success is

emergent (Conley, 2007; Hein, Smerdon, & Sambolt, 2013). It is important to note the research that is reviewed is correlational and not causal; thus, non-cognitive factors and other potential factors should not be considered causes of future outcomes (Hein et al., 2013). The topics of non-cognitive and other potential factors are discussed across grade spans from early childhood through postsecondary level in the following paragraphs.

Non-cognitive factors are defined as measures that are linked with improved postsecondary outcomes but for which a numeric threshold has not been established (Hein et al., 2013). Non-cognitive factors for postsecondary success identified in early childhood through postsecondary and beyond are discussed in the following paragraphs. Other potential factors are defined as skills and attributes that are important to students' success and are driven by sound theoretical arguments but for which reliable metrics have not yet been established independent of other factors (Hein et al., 2013). Wachen, Jenkins, and Van Noy (2010) suggested that other potential factors that relate to postsecondary success include student intent on pursuing a vocational or academic career as those students pursuing a vocational degree seem to complete their programs more often than those students enrolled in postsecondary programs strictly for academic purposes. Other potential factors for postsecondary success identified in early childhood through postsecondary and beyond are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Early Childhood Non-Cognitive and Other Potential Factors

The early childhood non-cognitive factors identified are components of a larger set of classroom competencies, or early approaches to learning, which have been researched across grade levels and relate to future readiness (e.g., mathematics and reading scores in the third grade and grade promotion in the fourth grade) (Li-Grining,

Votruba-Drzal, Maldonado-Carreño, & Haas, 2010). These non-cognitive factors include

persistence, emotion regulation, and attentiveness (Hair, Halle, Terry, Lavelle, & Calkins,

2006). In addition, participation in school-readiness screenings and preschool

programming has been significantly related to future school success. In addition, non-

cognitive factors such as physical health, social-emotional development, approaches to

learning, language, and cognitive development also have been identified as contributing

to children's readiness for school (Hair et al., 2006; Li-Grining et al., 2010) (Table 3).

Other potential factors identified that relate to school readiness include: working memory

skills; the display of positive play interactions with other students, teachers, and family

members; and the ability to remain engaged in a task until the task is complete

(Coolahan, Fantuzzo, Mendez, & McDermott, 2000; DiLalla, Marcus, & Wright-

Phillips, 2004; Fantuzzo & McWayne, 2002; McClelland, Acock, Piccinin, Rhea, &

Stallings, 2012). Research on these factors has found these skills are related to spelling

and writing scores through age seven, and students who exhibit these skills and behaviors

are more likely to be successful in the core subject areas of reading and mathematics

from kindergarten to the fifth grade (Gathercole, Brown, & Pickering, 2003) (Table 3).

At the elementary school level, certain social skills and behavioral non-cognitive

factors are correlated with future academic achievement. The *Social Skills Rating System*

assessed components of student behavior, which have been shown to be linked with

relationships and which, in turn, are associated with improved social adjustment and

academic achievement (Malecki & Elliot, 2002). The multi-rater tool collects

perspectives from teachers, parents, and students and assesses the following social skills:

cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control (Table 3). The most

common other potential factor at the elementary school level is the demonstration of social competence. Social competence is the ability to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships with others (Cotugno, 2009). However, the definition of social competence is not consistent across studies, nor is its measurement. However, social competence is still considered a potential predictor of both academic and social progress (Rubin & Rose-Krasnor, 1992) (Table 3).

Middle School Level Non-Cognitive and Other Potential Factors

Non-cognitive factors of future success for middle grades students include meeting the benchmark scores on cognitive assessments, such as the Grit Scale, a self-assessment that measures student characteristics (e.g., focus, interest levels, commitment, and follow-through) that have been shown to predict student ability to continue the pursuit of academic goals despite uncertainty, risk of failure, or feelings of frustration. High scores on the Grit Scale are correlated with positive outcomes at multiple levels. In the middle grades, high scores are correlated with higher student GPA, and one study asserts that, in adulthood, high scores also correlate with fewer career changes over time (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009) (Table 3).

The literature also suggested other potential factors in the middle grades, such as critical thinking and the ability to make informed decisions, which have been correlated with secondary-level academic achievement. For example, one study found a correlation between seventh-grade non-cognitive factors and 10th-grade academic achievement (Fleming, Haggerty, Catalano, Harachi, Mazza, & Gruman, 2005). In addition, social and emotional learning (SEL) skills that have been found to be related to future

achievement include emotional expression, support-seeking behaviors, and direct

problem-solving and cognitive decision-making skills (Fedorowicz, 1995) (Table 3).

High School Level Non-Cognitive and Other Potential Factors

Non-cognitive factors for postsecondary success at the high school level include

low-mobility or school transfer rates between grades. Rumberger and Larson found that

even one school transfer between Grades 8 and 12 is correlated with a dropout rate that is

twice as high as observed for students who do not transfer (1998) (Table 3). Other

potential factors that have more recently gained attention at the high school level are

participation in college preparatory activities, such as summer transition and orientation

programs, as well as high school-to-college bridge programs (Barnett, Corwin,

Nakanishi, Bork, Mitchell, Sepanik, et al., 2012; Mishook, 2012). Some of these

programs include the opportunity to earn college credit but focus primarily on cognitive

skill development and easing the transition process. Program activities include meeting

with academic advisors and guidance counselors and completing college-readiness

lessons or pretests for college entrance exams (Barnett et al., 2012; Mishook, 2012). It is

important to note that this research is based on correlational studies, not causal studies.

In addition, Barnett et al., (2012) reported that none of the studies reviewed track students

beyond the completion of the second year of postsecondary schooling (Table 3).

Postsecondary and Beyond Non-Cognitive and Other Potential Factors

The non-cognitive factors of postsecondary success include participation in

college and career orientation and baccalaureate transfer programs and maintaining a

combination of full-time enrollment and part-time employment status (Leinbach &

Jenkins, 2008). Several studies indicate that involvement in extracurricular activities and

membership in on-campus student organizations predict success in the form of sustained

positive academic, psychological, and civic engagement (Aud, Ramani, & Frohlich,

2011; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006) (Table 3). Other potential factors that relate to

postsecondary success are limited to the area of adult education and are largely dependent

on data provided by workforce innovation agencies. Findings from research conducted

on the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model suggest that adult

students who enroll in postsecondary programs with the intentions of pursuing a

vocational career fare better in achieving their career-oriented goals when compared to

other adult students enrolling in postsecondary programs strictly for academic purposes

(Wachen et al., 2010) (Table 3).

Table 3

School Correlates of Non-Cognitive and Other Potential Factors Impacting Latino Students' College Enrollment and Graduation

School Level	Non-Cognitive Factors	Other Potential Factors
Early Childhood	Participation in child care and early education	Cognitive understanding and cognitive control
	Early approaches to learning	Positive play interaction at home and school
	Positive "school readiness" school profile	Working memory skills
		Social emotional learning
		Attention span persistence
		Emergent literacy
Elementary School Level	Being rated highly by teachers on attention span and classroom participation	Social Competence
	High scores on the Social Skills Rating System	
Middle School Level	Taking rigorous coursework in the middle grades	Social-emotional and decision-making skills
	High scores on the Grit-S and Grit-O scales	
High School Level	Early Assessment Program completion	Participation in SEL intervention
	Early Assessment Program completion	Meeting with academic advisor
	Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) completion	ACT work keys, NWRC based on Equipped for the Future standards, and the CASAS
		Workforce Skills Certification System
Post-Secondary & Beyond 2 &4 Years	Two and Four Year Institutions	
	Enrollment in a baccalaureate transfer program	
	Working less than 15 hours per week	
	Participation in extracurricular activities; high educational expectations for self	

Note. Adapted from: "Predictors of Postsecondary Success," p. 4. Coolahan et al., 2000; Dilalla et al., 2004; Fantuzzo & McWayne, 2002; Gathercole et al., 2003; Hair et al., 2006; Li-Grining et al., 2010; McClelland et al., 2012"Predictors of Postsecondary Success," p.5. Cotugno, 2009; Malecki & Elliot, 2002; Rubin & Rose-Krasnor, 1992; "Predictors of Postsecondary Success" p. 6. Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Fedorowicz, 1995; Fleming et al., 2005"Predictors of Postsecondary Success" p. 9. Barnett et al., 2012; Mishook, 2012; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; "Predictors of Postsecondary Success" p. 11. Aud et al., 2011; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Leinbach & Jenkins, 2008; Wachen et al., 2010

In addition to identifying non-cognitive and other potential factors which support undergraduate college graduation, educators must consider how these factors may be operationalized and implemented into institutional practices. Several research based institutional practices are discussed below.

Institutional Practices to Support Undergraduate College Graduation

Several practices to assist Latino students through the pipeline to undergraduate college graduation include institutional practices such as:

1. Connecting students with on-campus jobs to help them meet financial needs in an environment that is supportive to their learning needs and goals (Nakajima, Dembo & Mossler, 2012).

2. Offering alternative times (e.g., nights and weekends) for academic services such as advising to help students to connect with staff to obtain advice about coursework, career opportunities, and transfer policies (Hagedorn, Cypers, & Lester, 2011).

3. Providing emotional support services through culturally-sensitive counseling and mentorship programs to help students make successful transitions as well as to promote social integration by providing an environment in which they feel welcomed and valued (Crisp & Nora, 2009; Piedra, Schiffner, & Reynaga-Abiko, 2011).

4. Providing opportunities for students to connect with faculty outside of class time (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Barnett, 2010) helps them learn campus values and, build personal connections to academic groups on campus, which ultimately contributes to persistence.

5. Integrating campus academic support services into developmental coursework helps students build partnerships between support services and coursework. This enhances

awareness of the needs of students who encounter barriers that place them at high-risk for dropping out of college, allowing support services professionals to anticipate and proactively address students' needs (Nakajima et al., 2012).

6. Providing faculty and staff training on diverse student needs in postsecondary settings offer resources to support students in a culturally-relevant way.

Furthermore, it encourages new ways of thinking about how institutional practices and structures can be shifted to reduce barriers to student success (Rendon, 1994). Research demonstrates that Latino students and their families believe in the value of an education. Yet, institutional and structural inequalities, often encountered in early education experiences, place Latino students at a considerable disadvantage for accessing and succeeding in higher education environments (Arbona & Nora, 2007).

Research on benchmarks for postsecondary success is emergent, and there is a shortage of reliable non-cognitive and other potential factors of postsecondary success (Hein et al., 2013). It is important to note the research that has been reviewed is correlational and not causal; thus, non-cognitive and other potential factors should not be considered causes of future outcomes (Hein et al., 2013). Finally, from what has been gleaned from the review of the research, these studies tend to test factors independently of, rather than in conjunction with, other proposed factors of success (Hein et al., 2013). There is little evidence to suggest that postsecondary non-cognitive and other potential factors are being used together to provide students with a comprehensive snapshot of their own level of preparedness as they move through each grade level (Hein et al., 2013; Conley, 2007). In the next section, the researcher discusses the educational status of Latinos at various levels.

The State of Education for Latinos

According to Santiago and Galdeano (2014), in order for the United States to regain the top ranking in the world for college degree attainment, Latinos will need to earn 5.5 million more degrees by 2020. Facts regarding Latinos' presence in educational institutions in the United States include: (a) the Kindergarten through -12th grade population is 22% Latino; (b) the total population is 17% Latino; (c) the median age is 27 for Latinos, compared to 42 for White non-Latino; (d) degree Attainment is 20% for Latino adults (25 and older) earning an associate degree or higher, compared to 36% of all adults; (e) graduation rate is 41% for Latino students graduating within 150% of program time for first-time, full-time freshmen, compared to 50% of all students (Santiago & Galdeano, 2014).

Key issues regarding education for Latinos include raising awareness of the benefits of and increased access to a quality early childhood education; highlight robust and effective examples of reform and rigor in our K-12 school systems; and promote promising practices, partnerships, and institutions of higher education that are graduating more Latinos ready and prepared to enter the competitive workforce (Ceja, 2014). While more than half of all Latinos are concentrated in three states – California, Texas and Florida – states like Alabama and South Carolina have seen more than a 150 % increase since 2000 (Pew Research Center, 2013). Latinos and the education systems that serve them in these emerging communities often experience unique challenges and are not equipped with the same resources available in more established communities.

By 2018, it is estimated that nearly two-thirds of new jobs created in the U.S. economy will require workers to pursue education beyond high school (Carnevale, Smith,

& Strohl, 2010). According to a recent report from the Lumina Foundation for Education (2010), only 37.9% of the American adult population currently holds a college degree or credential. To address this gap, President Obama's American Graduation Initiative challenges states to contribute to the goal of helping 5 million additional Americans earn college degrees and certificates by 2020 (Obama, 2009).

The inequity in high school graduation for Latino students creates a disparity between the dream of earning a college credential and college access. For Latino students, the dream of college is unlikely to be realized. Many Latino students, who graduate from high school, are underprepared to make the transition to postsecondary education. Only 8% of Latino students that do graduate are considered college ready, meaning their ACT composite score is greater than 21 (Advance Illinois, 2010).

A lack of college aspiration is not the barrier to success for Latino students but rather the lack of preparation and access to college opportunities. According to Lopez (2009), nearly 88% of Latino high school students surveyed agreed that college credentials are necessary for upward mobility. Similarly, 77% of these high school students indicated that they believe this sentiment is shared among their parents, indicating familial support for the decision to pursue a college credential (Lopez, 2009). To that end, if most Latino high school students and their family members recognize the need to attain college credentials, then the barriers to success and degree completion need to be determined and resolved. As stakeholders and the public work to reframe the Latino educational narrative from a deficit-based one to an asset-driven one, the efforts toward change will rely on the data derived from the implementation of evidence-based

programs or models that address key topics and have a positive impact on the Latino community.

High Quality Early Learning

Latinos make up nearly 24 % of all pre-K-12 public school students and are the largest segment of the early childhood population in the nation (Pew Research Center, 2012). The second largest group of the early childhood population is Latinos. In 2012, Latinos were 26% of the U.S. population under the age of five, while Whites represented 50%, African Americans 14%, and Asians 5% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). This Latino population under the age of five is projected to increase. By 2060, Latinos are projected to represent 39% of the U.S. population under the age of five, compared to Whites (31%), African Americans (13%), and Asians (7%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). However, Latino children are less likely to be enrolled in early childhood education than other groups. In 2011, 56% of Latino children under the age of five were enrolled in nursery school or kindergarten, compared to 67% White children, 65% of African American children, and 64% of Asian children who were enrolled (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

Latino children attending nursery school or kindergarten are more likely to attend full-day programs. These children under the age of five enrolled in nursery school or kindergarten, 59% were enrolled in full-day programs, while 41% were enrolled in part-day programs. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Latino children living in poverty are less likely to enroll in nursery school or preschool. In 2011, 28% of Latino children (3-5 years) were enrolled in nursery school or preschool, compared to 38 % of

African American children, and 33% of White children (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2014; National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

Children of Latino origin are as likely as all children to have a family member teach them letters, numbers, or words. In a 2012 national survey on early childhood education participation, 97% of Latino families and 98% of all families reported teaching their child letters, words, or numbers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). The majority of Latino children have families who participate in key learning activities. In 2012, over 90% of Latino children ages 3-5 had parents who read and sang to them, and taught them numbers (Murphey, Guzman, & Torres, 2014).

In fall 2012, of children who were enrolled in a Head Start program, 37% were Latino and 63% were non-Latino (Office of Head Start, 2013). Nearly one quarter of all children enrolled in Head Start speak Spanish at home. In fall 2012, 25% of children enrolled in Head Start, spoke Spanish at home, compared to 71% who spoke English and 4% who spoke some other language (Office of Head Start, 2013). Due to lack of early intervention, Latino children have lower mean reading and math scores than other groups in general. In 2010-11, Latino children in kindergarten had lower mean reading and math scores than Asians and Whites, and similar scores as African Americans (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

Researchers believe that early childhood achievement influences later success (Barnett, 2008; Saracho & Spodek, 2013). According to the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics (WHIEEH, 2014), the benefits of preschool are particularly powerful as children from low-income families, on average, start kindergarten 12 to 14 months behind their peers in pre-reading and language skills. By

age two, Latino children are less likely than their non-Latino peers to demonstrate expressive vocabulary skills (Saracho & Spodek, 2013). Studies reveal that children from middle- and upper-class households have heard some 30 million more words by age five than children from lower-income households (Saracho & Spodek, 2013). English-proficient Latino children are about three months behind White children in pre-reading skills and five months behind in early math skills.

Improving the quality of early learning programs and access to them in the Latino communities is more than just a moral and educational imperative; it is smart government. For every dollar spent on high-quality preschool, there is a 7-dollar return through increased productivity and savings on public assistance and criminal justice services (WHIEEH, 2014). From pre-kindergarten to elementary school the need for early intervention continues to remain urgent as educators continue to address the issue of college entry and graduation for Latino students. In the next section, the researcher discusses the state of education in the elementary school for Latino students.

Elementary School Learning

There are many variables found in the literature for the lack of education received by Latino students in classrooms today. Latinos represent the second largest group of elementary education students. In 2012, Latinos represented almost 25% of children 5-14 years of age in the United States, while Whites represented 53%, African Americans 14%, and Asians 5% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). By 2060, Latinos are projected to represent more than one-third of all United States children. Of the total population under the age of 14, Latinos will represent 38%, compared to Whites (33%), African Americans (13%), and Asians (7%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The majority of Latino students

can speak English without difficulty. Of the Latino students ages 5 to 17 who spoke a language other than English at home, 84% spoke English with no difficulty (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015).

Many Latino students attend schools with high degrees of poverty. In 2011-12, 37% of Latino students were enrolled in elementary schools where the majority of students were eligible for the free or reduced-price school lunch program. By comparison, 50% of African American, 38% of American Indian/Alaskan Natives, and 9% of White students attended schools where the majority of students were low- income (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Latino students for the most part are enrolled in highly segregated schools. In 2011, approximately 60% of Latino students attended schools where the majority of students were minorities. In comparison, 55% of African American, 38% of Asian, and 4% of White students were enrolled in segregated schools (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). The data indicates that beginning in early grades many Latino students enter classrooms facing one of the most powerful barriers to learning, poverty. However, in spite of the struggles brought on by poverty many Latino students excel in several academic areas as discussed in the paragraphs below.

Latino students are the second largest group represented in gifted and talented education programs. In 2011-12, Latino students represented 17% of students enrolled in gifted and talented education programs, compared to Whites (60%), Asians (10%), and African Americans (9%) (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). In addition, they have accelerated their progress in math. Between 2003 and 2013, the average 4th grade National Assessment of Educational Progress math score for Latino

students increased 9 points (to 231). In the same time frame, 8th grade math scores for Latinos increased 11 points (to 263) (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2013; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Furthermore, Latino students have increased progress in reading scores. Between 2003 and 2013, the 4th grade National Assessment of Educational Progress Latino reading scores increased 7 points (to 207). In the same time frame, 8th grade reading scores increased 11 points (to 256) (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2013; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Average math and reading scores for Latino students are lower than that of other groups, but higher than African Americans. In 2013, the average 4th grade National Assessment of Educational Progress math scores for Latino students were 27 points below Asians and 19 points below Whites. The average 4th grade National Assessment of Educational Progress reading scores for Latino students were 28 points below Asians and 25 points below Whites. Latino students scored 7 points above African Americans in math and 1 point above in reading (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2013; National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). According to elementary school academic data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (2013) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2013), Latino students are showing positive growth academically at the elementary level. Since they are the largest or second largest group enrolled at all levels of schooling, this trend of academic growth at the elementary must continue and carry over to the secondary level to make an impact at the level of college entry.

Secondary School Learning

Data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau (2014) indicated that Latinos represented 22% of high school students, while Whites represented 53%, African Americans 16%, and Asians 5%. Latino representation in high schools is projected to increase. Between 2008 and 2019, the number of Latino public high school graduates will increase 41%, compared to Asians (30%), African Americans (9%), and American Indian/Alaska Natives (2%). The number of White high school graduates is projected to decline by 12% (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE, 2012). Of students who participate in special education, Latino students are the second largest group. In 2011-12, 21% of all special education students were Latino, while Whites represented 54%, African Americans 19%, and Asians 2% (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013).

Average National Assessment of Educational Progress scores in both math and reading for Latino high school seniors have consistently increased over the past ten years. In 2013, the average math score increased from 133 to 141 and the average reading score increased from 272 to 276 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2013; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Latinos' high school dropout rates have decreased, but still remain higher than other groups. Between 2003-12, Latino student dropout rate decreased by nearly half (from 24% to 13%). However, it remains higher than that of African Americans (8%) and Whites (4%) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Latinos were less likely to graduate high school on time than other groups, except for African Americans. In 2010, 71% of Latino high school students graduated within four years of enrolling in high school, compared to 94% of Asian

students, 83% of White students, and 66% of African American students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013).

Latino students represented 17% of Scholastic Aptitude Test test-takers for 2013 college bound seniors, but had lower mean scores in all areas of the SAT than did White, Asian, or American Indians/Alaskan Native college-bound seniors (The College Board, 2013). Latinos scored higher in math (459) than reading, but had lower math scores than Asians (597), Whites (534), and American Indian/Alaskan Native (486) (The College Board, 2013). Latinos were the second largest group to take the American College Testing (ACT) in 2013, but had lower scores than other groups, along with African Americans. Latinos represented 14% of students who took the ACT in 2013, compared to Whites (58%), African Americans (13%), and Asians (4%). Only 14% of Latinos met all four ACT benchmarks that predict student success, compared to Asians (43%), Whites (33%), and African Americans (5%) (ACT, 2013). While much less likely than Whites, Latino students are the second most represented group among students who took at least one advanced placement (AP) course. In 2011-12, Latinos represented 18% of students enrolled in at least one AP course, compared to Whites (59%), Asians (10%), African Americans (9%), and students of other groups (4%) (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

Data collected by the National Center of Educational Statistics (2013) indicated that Latinos have a higher college-going rate than other groups. In 2012, 70% of recent Latino high school graduates had enrolled in college, compared to their White (66%) and African American peers (56%) (National Center of Educational Statistics, 2013). Over the last ten years, Latinos' college-going rate increased considerably. Between 2002 and

2012, Latinos increased their college-going rate from 54% to 70% (National Center of

Educational Statistics, 2013). Since the Latino population is the fastest growing

population, it is no surprise that there is a higher college-going rate than other groups.

The dilemma lies in keeping those who enroll in college until graduation and to ensure

that more Latino students enroll in 4-year universities. In the next section, data regarding

the disproportionate percentage of Latino students enrolled in community colleges is

discussed. Community college administrators must focus portions of their improvement

plans on transitioning the students to 4-year universities.

Community College Enrollment

In fall 2012, Latinos were the second highest group enrolled in community

colleges. Data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that

Latinos were 20% of the student body enrolled in community colleges, while Whites

represented 54%, African Americans 15%, and Asians 6% (National Center for

Educational Statistics, 2013). In 2012, almost half of Latinos in higher education were

enrolled in community colleges (46%) or private 2-year institutions (3%) (National

Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). In 2012, 46% of Latinos in higher education

were enrolled in community colleges, compared to African American (34%), Asian

(32%), and White (31%) students in higher education (National Center for Educational

Statistics, 2013).

Over half of Latino students at 2-year colleges need remediation. Of students

who started at a 2-year college in 2006, 58% of Latinos needed remediation, compared to

African Americans (68%) and Whites (47%) (Complete College America, 2012). The

majority of Latino students earn associate's degrees at community colleges. In 2012-13,

23 of the top 25 institutions where Latinos earned associate degrees were community

colleges (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013a). The highest concentrations of

Latinos enrolled in community colleges are in Texas and California. Reports of data

collected in 2012-13 indicate that 62% of Latinos were enrolled in community colleges in

California or Texas (Excelencia in Education, 2014).

Over two-thirds of all Latino students at 2-year institutions enrolled at a Hispanic-

Serving Institution (HSI). In 2012-13, 2-year HSIs (193 institutions) represented 18% of

all 2-year institutions. These HSIs enrolled 69% of all Latino undergraduates who

attended 2-year institutions (Excelencia in Education 2014a). Over the last 10 years,

more Latinos earned an associate's degree as the highest degree earned, compared to a

bachelor's degree. From 2004-2013, for those who earned an associate degree as their

highest degree, Latinos increased 78%, while bachelor's degrees as highest degree earned

by Latinos increased 65% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). In 2013, of the total Latino adult

population, 7% earned an associate degree as their highest degree; 4% were academic

degrees and 3% were occupational degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). The top three

disciplines where Latinos earned associate degrees were liberal arts (38%), health

professions (16%), and business (12%). The majority of degrees earned in these fields of

study have remained consistent over the past ten years for Latinos (National Center for

Educational Statistics, 2013). Community colleges have traditionally served as an entry

point for Latino students. The majority of Latinos, who attend institutions of higher

education, enroll in community colleges, but most do not complete the programs or

transfer to four-year universities (Fry, 2002; Ornelas, 2002; Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006).

According to Yosso (2006), only 1 of every 100 Latino students who start out in

elementary school actually enrolls in community colleges and transfer to four-year universities. Community colleges are well-positioned to continue offering job retraining and education credentialing opportunities that not only help individuals build lifelong skills, but that also strengthen local and national economies in ways that are called for by efforts such as the *American Graduation Initiative* (Fry & Lopez, 2012). Due to academic under-preparation in high school, many Latino students begin their higher education at community colleges where they receive developmental education to prepare them for college-level course work (Fry & Lopez, 2012). Looking nationally, about 2 million Latino students' ages 18-24 enrolled in colleges across the country (Lopez, 2009), and a disproportionate number of these students (58%) enroll in two-year institutions (Piedra, Schiffner, & Reynaga-Abko, 2011). Latinos make up 25% of 18-24 years olds enrolled in two-year colleges (Fry, 2011; Fry & Lopez, 2012). Higher education institutions should consider what prevents Latino students who enroll in community colleges from succeeding in transfer to the baccalaureate. Finding answers to this question regarding counseling Latino students to the point of graduation is essential because of the possible impact this fast growing population may have on the future economy of Texas; and as previously stated, it is expected that educational work in Texas will have profound ramifications nationally, because in many ways, the demographic trends in Texas predetermine those in many other states (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2008). Although growth is happening, there is still much work to be done.

Profile of Latinos in Higher Education

Attention to Latinos in higher education began in the late 1960s during the civil rights movement. During this era, Chicano and Puerto Rican youth activists called for meaningful access to higher education (MacDonald, Botti, & Clark, 2007). These movements called for "curricular changes that reflected the changing composition of student populations, college faculty and staff to serve as role models for aspiring scholars, Latino culture and research centers, and financial means to realize these goals" (MacDonald, Botti, & Clark, 2007, p. 475).

By the 1980s, college attendance for Latino students began to rise and high school drop-out rates began to decrease (Baker & Velez, 1996; Olivas, 1986). Between 1976 and 1998, the number of traditional aged (18-23 years) Latino students increased by 165%. The number of traditional aged Latino students doubled in just eight years from 400,000 students in 1990 to 800,000 students in 1998 (MacDonald et al., 2007). Similarly, with the rise in enrollment was the increase in college degrees attained by these students.

After the late 1990s, the positive attainments made by Latino students made a turn in the opposite direction (Carnevale, 2003). The gains made by Latino students in higher education in previous years were overshadowed by new and complex challenges. Issues involving financial support, generational progress, retention rates, and the achievement gap between learners became the foci of Latino researchers (Carnevale, 2003; MacDonald et al., 2007). In 2012, Latinos were the second largest racial/ethnic group enrolled at the undergraduate level—16% of the undergraduate population (2.8 million) (Excelencia in Education, 2014b). Further, Latino college enrollment is projected to

increase more than other groups in the next ten years. Between 2011 and 2022, Latino

enrollment is projected to increase 27% compared to 26% for African Americans, 7% for

Whites, and 7% for Asian/Pacific Islanders (Excelencia in Education, 2015). While

Latinos' enrollment in college is growing, Latino adults still have lower levels of

educational attainment than other adults. In 2013, 15% of Latino adults earned a

baccalaureate degree or higher, compared to 22% of African American, 32% of White,

and 53% of Asian adults (Excelencia in Education, 2015). While Latinos' enrollment in

college is growing, Latino adults still have lower levels of educational attainment than

other adults.

  Latinos in undergraduate education. Latinos represent the second largest group of the

traditional college age population (18-24 years old) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). In 2012, 21% of

the U.S. population of traditional college age students were Latino, while Whites represented 56%,

African Americans 15%, and Asians 5% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). More Latino males are of

traditional college age than females. In 2012, 53% of all Latinos of traditional college age were

male (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). In 2012, 2.8 million Latinos were enrolled at the undergraduate

level (16%), compared to 10.2 million Whites (59%), 2.6 million African Americans (15%), and

1.1 million Asians (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Most Latino freshmen who

had taken the ACT persisted in enrollment. In 2011, 73% of Latino undergraduate freshmen who

had taken the ACT returned for their second year (ACT, 2013; Excelencia in Education, 2014).

Between 2011 and 2022, Latinos' college enrollment is projected to increase 27%, compared to

African Americans (26%), Whites (7%), and Asians (7%) (National Center for Educational

Statistics, 2013). In fall 2012, 51% of Latinos were enrolled in a four-year institution and 49% were

enrolled at a 2-year institution (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). The majority of

Latino students are concentrated in a small number of institutions. In 2012-13, almost 60% of Latino undergraduates were enrolled in the 11% of institutions of higher education identified as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) (Excelencia in Education, 2014). Latinos significantly increased attainment of associate's degrees in the last 10 years compared to other groups (Excelencia in Education, 2014). From 2003-04 to 2012-13, the number of Latinos receiving an associate degree increased 75%. In that same timeframe, African Americans increased 44%, Asians increased 39%, and Whites 'increased 37% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Latinos increased bachelor's degree attainment in the last ten years. In 2013, 3.1 million Latinos had earned a bachelor's degree as their highest degree earned. This was a 63% increase from the 1.9 million Latinos who held a bachelor's degree in 2004 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

Latinos in graduate education. Latinos represented a lower percentage of students in graduate programs than other groups. In 2012, Latinos represented 7% of students enrolled in graduate education, compared to Whites (60%), African Americans (13%), international students (11%), Asians (7%), and Native Americans (0.5%) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Latino graduate student enrollment is relatively concentrated. In 2012-13, 37% of all Latino graduate students enrolled at an HSI. These 139 HSIs represent 4% of all institutions with graduate offerings (Excelencia in Education, 2014). In 2012-13, 63% of Latinos enrolled in a graduate program attended an institution in California, Texas, Puerto Rico, New York, and Florida (Excelencia in Education, 2014). Latinos represent a small percentage of the population earning master's degrees. In 2012, 7% of all master's degrees conferred were earned by Latino students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). From 2003 – 2012, the number of master's degrees earned by Latinos increased 103%, compared to African Americans (89%), Asians (65%), and Whites (36%) (National Center for Educational

Statistics, 2013). Over half of Latino graduate students earned their master's degree in three disciplines: education (26%), business (25%), and health professions (10%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013a). Fewer Latinos have earned a master's degree as their highest degree than other groups. As of 2013, 3% of Latino adults had a master's degree as their highest degree, compared to Asians (15%), Whites (8%), and African Americans (6%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Latinos represent a small percentage of the population earning doctoral degrees. In 2011-12, 5% of all doctoral degrees conferred were earned by Latinos (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Latinos increased the number of doctoral degrees they earned in the past ten years. From 2003 – 2012, the number of doctoral degrees earned by Latinos increased (67%), compared to African Americans (56%), Asians (49%) and Whites (32%) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). The majority of Latino doctoral students earned their degrees in two fields of study: legal professions (39%) and health professions (32%) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Fewer Latinos have earned doctoral degrees than other groups. As of 2013, less than 1% of Latino adults had earned a doctoral degree as the highest degree attained, compared to Asians (4%), Whites (2%), and African Americans (1%). (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Latinos earned doctoral degrees at lower levels than other groups. As of 2013, 141,000 Latinos had earned a doctoral degree as the highest degree earned, compared to Whites (2.6 million), Asians (502,000), and African Americans (192,000) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

Many efforts are being made to close the gaps and find ways to encourage Latino students to enroll in college and graduate. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating

Board's (2015), 60x30TX plan focuses on college completion and workforce readiness; "this reimagining "college" and "college-going" and to continue to build on *Closing the Gap of 2000* bold new thinking must take place in order to keep up with workforce demands in Texas given the aforementioned data of the fastest growing population in the nation" (p. 73). According to the plan and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board:

Higher education is not only about producing degrees and doing research, but also about spurring new businesses. Economic growth, productivity, and development flourish when paired with the skills and new ideas students gain from higher education. Entrepreneurship programs and small business institutes, for example, nurture new businesses. For some students, college will mean earning a certificate in a year-long program. For other students, college will mean earning an associate or bachelor's degree by attending traditional classes or by participating in competency-based programs. For still others, college will mean earning associate degrees through dual credit or early college high school programs. College may take place on a brick-and-mortar campus or on a device in a student's living room. Regardless of the credential or method used to attain it, a college education will translate into more engaged citizens and greater prosperity for individuals, which will mean greater economic prosperity for the state. (2015, pp. 73-74)

Programs that Work for Latino Students in Higher Education

In 2004, Excelencia in Education was launched in the nation's capital to create awareness of critical issues in postsecondary education that impact the success of Latino

students and to provide intentional, strategic and tactical responses to meeting the challenge of accelerating Latino student success. The organization has built a portfolio that links research, policy, and practice to support Latino higher educational achievement. In addition, through the development of this organization venues and opportunities have been created to examine critical issues from new perspectives and reconsider traditional efforts in a post-traditional context that can benefit all students (Excelencia in Education, 2015).

In 2005, Examples of Excelencia were published. This effort is the only evidence based national initiative to identify and publicize programs that accelerate Latino student success in postsecondary education. It functions, in part, as an organizing and communication campaign that redirects the field from the repetitive focus on problems to striving for student success solutions (Excelencia in Education, 2015). The programs described in Table 4 are recognized by Excelencia in 2014 and are at the forefront of meeting the challenge of improving higher educational achievement for Latino students. The recognized programs were selected based on the following criteria: (a) size and need for the program services; (b) record of increased Latino student enrollment, retention, and completion; (c) qualitative or quantitative evidence of the program services' impact; (d) leadership committed to accelerating Latino student success; (e) strong network with other stakeholders, community leaders, and schools; (f) services that integrate Latino culture and enhance Latino students' navigation between their homes, schools, communities, and careers; and (g) programs with innovative and/or significant improvement of increasing Latino student success in a short period of time (Excelencia in Education, 2014).

Table 4

Programs that Work for Latino Students in Higher Education

Program	Purpose	Year Est.	Location
Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS)-(AAP)	Increase the low education attainment level of Latino students in the community by reducing the high school dropout rate and increasing the number of students that attend and graduate from college	1994	University of Houston, Houston, Texas
Bilingual Undergraduate Studies for Collegiate Advancement (BUSCA) ALS	To fully meet the needs of at-risk student populations, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college, are developing their academic English, come from the lowest performing schools in Philadelphia, and live below the poverty line	1993	LaSalle University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
First Year Pathways (FYP)	To serve students in their first year of college by providing support inside and outside the classroom. It is particularly dedicated to students of color, many of whom are under-prepared for college-level work	2011	Pasadena City College, Pasadena, California
STEM Pathways Project	To increase the STEM degree attainment and transfer rate of Latino and low-income students while also providing outreach to the Latino community by introducing middle and high school students to STEM fields and careers at an early age	2011	Crafton Hills College, Yucaipa, California
Students Transitioning in Academics and Reaching Success (STARS)	To help and encourage students with multiple barriers successfully achieve their educational goals	2010	Cabrillo College, Aptos, California

(continued)

Program	Purpose	Year Est.	Location
Dual Enrollment Academy Programs	To provide Latino students the opportunity to obtain an associate's degree before completing high school. The mission of the Academies is to indoctrinate a "college-going" culture within their student body by providing the unique opportunity for students to complete an associate's degree while also completing their high school requirements	2005	South Texas College, McAllen, Texas
Express to Success Program (ESP)	To increase success and completion rates for developmental math and English for Latino students who place one to two levels below college level courses	2011	Santa Barbara College, Santa Barbara, California
Achieving in Research, Math, and Science Center (ARMAS)	To increase STEM student retention and graduation through collaborative-based and innovative best practices	2007	New Mexico Highlands University, Las Vegas, New Mexico
Community Fellows Program of the Community-Based Learning Program (CBL)	To enable students to connect passions for public service and community development, academic studies, career preparation, and wage earning while attending college and avoiding the unfortunate trade-off students are often forced to make, between work and typically unpaid community engagement /volunteerism	1990	Mount Holyoke College Weisman Center for Leadership, South Hadley, Massachusetts
California State University Northridge Engineering and Computer Science HIS-STEM Initiative	To increase the number of Latino and low-income students who successfully transfer from Glendale Community College (GCC), and College of the Canyons (COC) to California State University, Northridge, to pursue majors in engineering and/or computer science	2011	California State University, Northridge (CSUN), Northridge, California
Imperial Valley University Partnership (IVUP)	To support first generation, low income Latino students in successfully enrolling, persisting, and graduating from San Diego State University (SDSU-IV) in four years with the option of completing an associate's degree	2011	San Diego State University Imperial Valley Campus, Calexico, California

Program	Purpose	Year Est.	Location
California State University Northridge Engineering and Computer Science HIS-STEM Initiative	To increase the number of Latino and low-income students who successfully transfer from Glendale Community College (GCC), and College of the Canyons (COC) to California State University, Northridge, to pursue majors in engineering and/or computer science	2011	California State University, Northridge (CSUN), Northridge, California
The Nepantla Program	To…1) create a college going environment for underrepresented/first generation high school students; 2) provide remedial courses to address equity academic gaps for incoming freshman students; 3) offer specialized social justice and identity formation college courses; 4) advise and mentor students on academic, career, and professional development all four years they are enrolled; and 5) facilitate a familia cohort anchored in community involvement	2013	Nevada State College, Henderson, Nevada
Graduate Support Center/University	To increase the persistence rate of Latino master's degree seeking students by developing and implementing academic and support initiatives that will ensure the academic success of the student while integrating the student's family	2010	University of Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas
Department of Occupational Therapy	To prepare graduate level professionals capable of meeting the challenges of health care and community environments, and the needs of the growing international and multi-cultural populations of the south Texas region	1996	University of Texas Pan American, Edinberg, Texas
Con Mi MADRE (CMM)	To empower young Latinas and their mothers through education and support services that increase preparedness, participation, and success in post-secondary education	1992	Austin, Texas

(continued)

Program	Purpose	Year Est.	Location
The Abriendo Puertas Program (Opening Doors)	To support undergraduate students from traditionally underserved backgrounds (first generation, low income, minority status students) in maximizing academic and social integration, goal setting, and commitment to achieving goals in a culturally relevant manner in order to remain in and finish college	1972	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Building Skills Partnership Parent University (BSP)	To break cycles of poverty through education	2007	UCLA Center for Labor Research
Colloquium Series Program	To identify Latino adult learners/workers interested in college degrees in Health, engage them in career/education pathways, address deficiencies providing composition, quantitative reasoning skills, prepare students for admission tests, avoid remediation – offer college level/credit bearing contextualized courses, increase retention and completion through workshops, tutoring, childcare, case management, curricula, and expand the program to the community	2011	New York, New York
Tulsa Community College (TCC) Education Outreach Center	To assist, inform, and empower those populations traditionally underserved in higher education and to provide a gateway to college through effective, accessible services that ultimately ensure student success and excellence	2007	Tulsa Community College, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Program	Purpose	Year Est.	Location
South Los Angeles Math (SLAM) Project College Bridge Non-Profit Organization	To…1) increase participants' pass rates in math-109; 2) increase the graduation rate of students; 3) increase the college matriculation rate of students; 4) increase Cohort 1's college persistence from year 2 to year 3; 5) increase Cohort 1's number of credits toward degree; 6) increase the number of credits toward degree of Cohorts 2 and 3; and 7) decrease the time to college degree completion	2011	Hacienda Heights, California
Trinity River Mission Core Programs (TRMS)	To…1) serve as an educational support system for children in the public school system; 2) provide English literacy to facilitate learning in all English speaking classrooms; 3) model educational values and tasks that will motivate students to stay in school; and 4) coach students to seek higher education which will earn better jobs with opportunities for further learning and advancement	Early 1960s	West Dallas, Texas
Levante Leadership Institute	To provide farmworker youth in Durham, North Carolina with the necessary tools, mentorship, and support to achieve in school and become leaders in their community	1998	Durham, North Carolina
Supporting Our Leaders (SOL)	To lessen the Latino achievement gap, increase college readiness, increase high school graduation rates, and increase college enrollment and retention with the ultimate goal of developing a talented and diverse workforce of educated and bilingual individuals that will positively affect their community	1978	Kent County, Western Michigan
INSPIRE (Influence Student Potential and Increase Representation in Education)	To better prepare students to enter into college and obtain an advanced degree in the biomedical and health professions	2011	Rosalind Franklin University of medicine and Science, North Chicago, Illinois

Program	Purpose	Year Est.	Location
Creating Latino Access to a Valuable Education (CLAVE)	To increase the number of Latino graduate students enrolled in the College of Education (COE) at Florida International University in Miami, Florida and to enhance the academic support services available at the College to increase degree completion rates	2012	College of Education at Florida International University and Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida
Spanish Language Family Orientation	To provide parent orientation to families in the Latino community in Spanish, to ensure the effective communication and understanding of the college experience and key University of North Texas (UNT) processes and resources	2013	Denton, Texas
GANAS (Gaining Access 'N Academic Success)	To increase the number of educationally underserved students who graduate with baccalaureate degrees or higher	2013	California State University East Bay, Hayward, California
Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars Program	To assist low income students in earning a bachelor's degree without relying on student loans by providing a full grant and scholarship package and opportunities for personal development	2006	University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida
LARES (Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services) Program	To provide personal growth and educational opportunities to University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) students and prepare leaders who will make individual and collective contributions toward the educational, cultural and social advancement of the Latino community	1975	University of Illinois at Chicago

Summary

Although Texas continues to improve the college readiness of its high school students, those who are not college ready continue to face serious barriers on their pathway to certificates and degrees (Helmcamp, 2010). While students entering higher education directly from high school are more likely to be college ready than are students

who do not, more than half of students entering a Texas public two-year college do not meet state college-readiness standards (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2010). This lack of readiness has a negative impact on postsecondary success (ACT, 2013). Of every 100 two-year college students who are below the state readiness standard when they enter college, only 37 have graduated or are still enrolled in higher education after three years, compared to 57 out of every 100 students who enter college ready (ACT, 2013).

The nation can make a measurable difference in increasing Latino student success in higher education by informing decision makers, demonstrating to them what can be done, and holding them accountable; by working within institutions to provide incentives, compel action; and by creating a supportive community of action-oriented advocates (Santiago & Lopez, 2013). By understanding the data trends for Latino and other post-traditional students, educators, policymakers and investors are better equipped to respond to today's students and future workforce (Santiago & Lopez, 2013). For example, while many of the education strategies in higher education assume a traditional college student, institution, and pathway to graduation, this profile is out of date (Pulley, 2012). Today, less than 20% of college students fit a "traditional" profile, enrolled full time in college in the fall after high school graduation, academically prepared, living on campus, and earning a baccalaureate degree in four years (Pulley, 2012). Strategies in higher education that address the real world context of Latino and other post-traditional students are needed to improve and ensure America's economic future (Santiago & Lopez, 2013).

The programs that work documented by Excelencia in Education (2014) each year include components of non-cognitive and other potential factors in the strategies of their

programs implemented to support Latino students. The strategies in their programs

include but are not limited to the following: academic preparation or study skills;

attitudinal conflicts; academic monitoring and counseling; academic and financial

advising; as motivational counseling in Spanish; specialized curriculum combined with

targeted support services; serve students in their first year of college by providing support

inside and outside the classroom; connectedness to the campus community; guaranteed a

full-time schedule; tutoring; financial aid; accommodations for learning disabilities;

hands-on experiences; civic development; special mentoring and advisement by faculty;

tutoring and peer mentoring; social activities; and field trips and opportunities to take part

in summer research projects. The aforementioned supports are just a sample of supports

provided to participants in the programs that work. Each of these supports could be

categorized as non-cognitive or other potential factors that impact students' progress

toward graduation from college (Bloomgarden, 2014; Martinez, 2014; Ramesh, 2014;

Woods, 2015).

In Chapter III, the researcher described the methodology used in this study. The

sections in the methodology chapter include purpose, research design, context and

setting, participants, instrumentation, data collection, reliability and validity, and data

analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation. In addition, the researcher explored the current and former participants' perceptions regarding other potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed would increase the participation in the AAP of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area. The data collected in previous program evaluations provided insights regarding the effectiveness of the program as it relates to students' academic progress (i.e., GPA, SAT scores, and graduation rates in four to six years, survey items regarding importance of academic goals, graduate school interest, AAP staff evaluation, and open-ended suggestions to improving AAP) (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). While a small section of the data collected showed that AAP participants viewed access to technology; access to books that were needed for course assignments; weekly tutoring; academic counseling; and leadership training as important factors that would contribute to their success in college, there is still a need to continue to ask participants questions that directly pertain to non-cognitive and other potential factors (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). There is a need to continue to document evidence that non-cognitive and other potential factors make a difference in the percentage of Latino students who graduate from institutions of higher education. This chapter details the methodology that was used in

the study, including research design, selection of participants, context, and setting,

instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

In this descriptive study, the researcher used the qualitative research methodology

of hermeneutical phenomenology to explore and more clearly describe the essence of

how current and former Latino participants in the AAP perceived non-cognitive factors

for college enrollment and graduation. In addition, the researcher explored the

perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP regarding other

potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed would increase the participation

in the AAP; college enrollment; and college graduation of low income, first generation

high school Latino students in the Houston area. In so doing, the researcher gained

knowledge as these participants shared their feelings, describing what they perceived and

sensed through their own self-awareness and experiences. Approaching the study from

this perspective allowed the researcher to explore the central underlying meaning of the

experiences that contained both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based

on memories, images, and meanings of these participants' responses (Moustakas, 1994).

The research questions used to better understand the phenomenon were:

1. What are the perceptions of current Latino participants in the AAP regarding

non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation?

2. What are the perceptions of former Latino participants in the AAP regarding

non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation?

3. What are the perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP

regarding other potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed will increase the

participation in the AAP; college enrollment; and graduation of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area?

The phenomenological research approaches designed by Bodgan and Biklen (2006) were used to analyze the data. Bodgan and Biklen (2006) described their process for analyzing the data in the following statement, "Analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 157). According to Lichtman (1996), phenomenological research approaches study the actual experiences of people regarding a certain phenomenon. Therefore, the phenomenological researcher must be open-minded toward a changing reality (Lancy, 1993). That is, he or she needs to be prepared to give explanations for observed phenomena. Phenomenology instructs the researcher to allow the phenomenon to reveal itself in its fullness. The Latino participants are diverse, and they enroll in colleges and universities with varying backgrounds and experiences while at the same time they experience common phenomena. It was important for the researcher to understand the diversity within the group of participants as inquiry is conducted. Thus, the researcher's Latino origin and former participation in the AAP, served to provide necessary knowledge to collect and correctly interpret the data, while keeping biases in check.

Boeree (2002) noted that the phenomena speak for themselves, meaning the researcher should be prepared to listen. In this study, the researcher described the perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors and other potential factors for college enrollment and graduation as they actually

appear to the participants, free of the researcher's biases and beliefs as supported by the

work of Gall, Gall, and Borg (2006).

Context and Setting

The researcher chose the Center for Mexican American Studies which houses the

AAP at the University of Houston main campus as the setting for the study for the

following reasons: (a) the researcher is a former participant in the AAP at the University

of Houston main campus, and (b) no other university in Texas or in the Houston area has

implemented the AAP on their campus. Founded in 1927, the University of Houston is

the leading public research university in the city of Houston. Each year, more than

40,750 students are educated in more than 300 undergraduate and graduate academic

programs, on campus and online. The University of Houston awards more than 8,000

degrees annually, with more than 230,000 alumni (University of Houston Office of

Institutional Research, 2014).

The University of Houston (UH) System is a group of 10 public institutions of

higher learning in the Houston area that share common goals and are governed by a

Board of Regents. The University of Houston System comprises four universities and six

multi-institution regional campuses that offer degrees in partnership with the universities

(University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

The University of Houston is the largest and most comprehensive institution of

the UH System (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). Together

with UH, the universities that make up the UH System are UH-Clear Lake, UH-

Downtown and UH-Victoria. The established teaching centers are UH Sugar Land, UH

System at Cinco Ranch, UH-Clear Lake Pearland, UH Northwest and UH Downtown

Northwest. In addition, UH offers several program components through facilities at the Texas Medical Center. The demographic data for the Main Campus is discussed in detail in the paragraphs below (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

Undergraduate Students' Demographics

Undergraduate student (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classifications) enrollment in the fall semester 2014 is discussed in the following section. There were 5,353 enrolled students classified as freshmen. In the freshman class, the number of males (2,876) was greater than females (2,477) (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). The largest student group was Hispanics (1,557). The Asian American students were the second largest group (1,385). White students were the third largest group (1,239). The total number of students classified as sophomore was 6,234. The number of male (3,131) and female (3,103) students was similar. The largest student group in the sophomore class was Hispanics (1,970). The second largest student group was White students (1,578), followed by Asian American students (1,416), which was the third largest student group. The total number of students classified as junior was 8,522. The number of males in the junior class was 4,170 and the number of females was 4,352. The largest student group classified as junior was Hispanics (2,853). The White student group (2,318) was the second largest. The Asian American student group (1,714) was the third largest. The total number of students classified as senior was 11,613. The largest student group in the senior class was Hispanic (3,540). The second largest group in the senior class was the White student group (3,481) followed by the Asian American student group (2,352) (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

Graduate Students Demographics

The graduate student groups at the University of Houston main campus include

post baccalaureate, master, and doctorate. The total number of students enrolled in the

post baccalaureate program was 1,315 (University of Houston Office of Institutional

Research, 2014). The total number of students included 687 males and 628 females.

White students make up the largest group (537). The second largest student group was

Asian Americans (261), followed by the Hispanic student group (235). The total number

of students enrolled in the master's program was 4,121. The total number includes 2,119

males and 2,002 females. The largest student group in the master's program was the

White student group (1,357). The second largest student group was the International

students (1,352) followed by the Hispanic student group (483). In addition, the African

American (407) and Asian American (391) student groups were close in size to the

Hispanic student group. The total number of students enrolled in the doctoral program

was 2,179. The total numbers of students enrolled include 1,005 females and 1,174

males. The largest student group in the doctoral program was the International student

group (1077). The second largest student group was the White student group (643),

followed by the Hispanic student group (182). The African American (124) and Asian

American (119) student groups follow close behind the Hispanic student group. The

University of Houston offers three programs in professional occupations. The

demographics for these occupations are addressed in the following paragraph (University

of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

Professional Occupations Students' Demographics

The University of Houston main campus has enrollments of students in programs for professional occupations. These programs include law, pharmacy, and optometry. The total number of students enrolled in these programs was 1,577. The law program had a total student enrollment of 722. The total number of students enrolled included 380 females and 342 males. White students make up the largest student group (418). The second largest student group was the Hispanic student group (110) followed by the Asian American student group (76). The pharmacy program had a total student enrollment of 459. The total number of students enrolled included 293 females and 166 males. The largest student group in the pharmacy program was the Asian American student group (255). The second largest student group was the White student group (109) followed by the African American and Hispanic student groups with enrollments of 29 students each. The optometry program had a total student enrollment of 396. The total number of students enrolled included 252 females and 144 males. The largest student group enrolled in this program was the White student group (175). The second largest student group was the Asian American student group (149) followed by the Hispanic student group (35) (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

Total Campus Enrollment by Gender and Ethnic/Racial Groups

Table 5 illustrates the total campus enrollment at the University of Houston main campus. The student enrollment is classified by gender and ethnic/racial groups. The data indicates that the male (20,730) and female (20,184) populations are close in size. The largest student group enrolled was White students (11,855). The second largest student group was Hispanic (10,994), followed by the Asian American student group

(8,118). The African American (4,173) and International (4,025) student groups are the

fourth largest groups (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

The diverse student enrollment at the University of Houston main campus is

reflective of the diversity of the city of Houston. As of 2010, Houston metropolitan area

is the most racially/ethnically diverse large metropolitan area in the nation, narrowly

surpassing the New York metropolitan area (Emmerson, Bratter, Howell, Jeanty, &

Cline, 2010). The Houston region has grown dramatically more racially/ethnically

diverse over the past 20 years, such that every racial/ethnic group is now a demographic

minority (Emmerson et al., 2010).

Table 5

Total University of Houston Main Campus Enrollment by Gender and Ethnic/Racial Groups Fall 2014

Gender	Total	African Amer.	Asian Amer.	Hawaiian Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Inter- natl.	Multi- Racial	Native Amer.	Unknown	White
Female	20,184	2,388	3,963	33	5,701	1,747	653	22	197	5,480
Male	20,730	1,785	4,155	64	5,293	2,278	565	25	190	6,375
Subtotal	40,914	4,173	8,118	97	10,994	4,025	1,218	47	387	11,855

Graduation and Retention Rates 2007-2014

For more than 20 years, the number of minorities in higher education has increased substantially (Harvey, 2003). While figures from current population surveys indicate that a larger number of Latinos are gaining access to higher education (Fry, 2002), which is encouraging, the comparative data are discouraging. Latinos display a lower college graduation rate than their African American and White counterparts. True access to higher education, however, cannot be defined simply as the enrollment of Latino students in postsecondary institutions but rather their persistence to degree attainment (University of Houston office of Institutional Research, 2014).

Table 6 illustrates data findings regarding graduation and retention rates of Latino students at the University of Houston main campus. The data collected during academic years 2007-2014 indicate that enrollment of full-time first time in college undergraduate degree seeking Latino students at the University of Houston main campus increased each year except for years 2008 (823 students) and 2009 (786 students). The years of highest enrollment were 2014 (1142 students), 2011 (1026 students), 2013 (978 students), 2012

(965 students), and 2010 (959 students) (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). Year four is designated as the year of on-time degree completion. Academic years 2007-2010 provide data for year four, on-time degree completion. Overall for this period of time, the annual retention percentage rate remained under 50% (2007-39.9%; 2008-40.8%; 2009-41.7%; and 2010-39.1%). Academic year 2010 is the year that the greatest number of students (167) completed their degrees on time. The cumulative graduation percentage rates during 2007-2010 academic years remained under 20% (2007-11.0%; 2008-14.3%; 2009-14.6% and 2010-17.4%) (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

Table 6

University of Houston Graduation and Retention Rates of Full Time First Time in College Undergraduate Degree-Seeking Latino Students

Year		Base Yr.	1 Yr.	2 Yrs.	3 Yrs.	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.	6 Yrs.	7 Yrs.
2007									
	Enrolled	752	590	470	401	300	137	65	035
	Cumulative Graduation		0	0	5	083	236	309	344
	Not Enrolled		162	282	346	369	379	378	373
	Annual Retention % Rate		078.5	62.5	53.3	39.9	018.2	008.6	4.7
	Cumulative Graduation % Rate				0.7	11.0	31.4	41.1	45.7
2008									
	Enrolled	823	645	525	480	336	161	65	
	Cumulative Graduation		0	1	9	118	282	326	
	Not Enrolled		178	297	334	369	380	382	
	Annual Retention % Rate		78.4	63.8	058.3	40.8	19.6	7.9	
	Cumulative Graduation % Rate			0.1	1.1	14.3	34.3	45.7	
2009									
	Enrolled	786	641	516	458	328	146		
	Cumulative Graduation		0	1	5	115	281		
	Not Enrolled		145	269	323	343	359		
	Annual Retention % Rate		81.6	65.6	58.3	41.7	18.6		

Year		Base Yr.	1 Yr.	2 Yrs.	3 Yrs.	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.	6 Yrs.	7 Yrs.
2010									
	Enrolled	959	744	609	557	375			
	Cumulative Graduation		0	0	13	167			
	Not Enrolled		215	350	389	417			
	Annual Retention % Rate		77.6	63.5	58.1	39.1			
	Cumulative Graduation % Rate				1.4	17.4			
2011									
	Enrolled	1026	839	684	601				

Academic Achievers Program (AAP)

The AAP was established in 1994 in an effort to enhance the academic performance of first time in college (FTIC) Latino students at the University of Houston main campus in Houston, Texas. The AAP is an early intervention program designed to provide Latino students in local high schools in the Houston area with knowledge, skills, and general college preparation needed to enter and succeed in college (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). The AAP at the University of Houston has helped students financially, academically, and even emotionally in terms of a support group (i.e., similar peer groups and caring staff) (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

The program is open to any student who meets the requirements. The following criteria are given consideration when selecting AAP participants: (a) minimum 2.7 GPA, (b) demonstrate scholastic achievement, (c) demonstrate financial needs, (d) must be first in family to attend college, (e) involved in extracurricular community leadership activities, (f) completed less than 66 credit hours, and (g) personal interview (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). Students who are accepted into the program are eligible to receive up to $3000 in scholarships each year. In return, students are required to: (a) enroll as a full-time student; (b) complete weekly mandatory study hall hours; (c) attend workshops dealing with time management, study skills, leadership development and career opportunities; (d) maintain a minimum 2.7 grade point average each semester; (e) attend academic counseling; (f) attend monthly meetings; and (g) sign a contract agreeing to abide by the requirements of the program (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). The progress of each student is monitored on a

regular basis throughout each semester. In addition, students visit job sites to learn about various job requirements and professional opportunities. Students are encouraged not to work more than 20 hours per week (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

<div align="center">**Participants**</div>

The participants for this study were purposefully selected from the populations of students that are currently enrolled AAP (108 on the rosters provided) and former AAP students that completed the program (82 on the rosters provided). The participants' contact information was obtained from the rosters kept in the Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS). Of these students, 20 current and 20 former (40 total) students were selected. The purposeful selection was conducted by choosing every other person on the list in each category to participate in the study based on if they could be contacted and/or elected to participate or not. Some of the students listed could not be contacted or chose not to participate so the researcher continued down the list. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003, p. 65), "The method of sampling in analytic induction is purposeful sampling. The researcher may choose particular subjects to include because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory." In addition, Gall, Gall, and Borg (2006) explained that the purpose in selecting participants in purposeful sampling "is to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied. A related purpose often is to discover or test theories" (p. 165). Creswell (2013) stated that phenomenology involves a study of "multiple individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon" (p. 112).

The criteria for selection included enrollment in the AAP (current and former participants) and graduation from college. Additional identifiers included gender, race, age, and year of program. Once identified from the rosters, the participants were notified by the researcher by U.S. mail, email, and/or phone to be invited to participate in the study. The survey was sent to all 40 (20 for each group) participants by email and U.S. mail. The participants were instructed to complete all of the 58 survey questions and return the survey to the researcher. All of the participants were invited to participate in a focus group session where they were allowed to expand on their written responses to open ended questions included in the survey. The focus group session was held at the Center for American Studies at the University of Houston main campus.

All selected participants did not respond to all survey questions and all participants did not return the survey to the researcher. Of the 20 surveys sent to the current AAP participants, 18 were returned. Ten of the 20 former AAP participants returned their surveys. Therefore, the researcher analyzed the data from the AAP participants that addressed the most questions on the surveys and were the same participants who volunteered to participate in the focus group. This purposeful selection of participants yielded a total of 16 current AAP participants, eight males and eight females, and a total of 8 former AAP participants, four males and four females. The oral and written participant responses were documented and analyzed to describe their perceptions of non-cognitive factors and other potential factors for college enrollment and graduation; and demographic information. Themes and patterns evolved from responses to survey questions as well as the follow-up focus group interview discussion to help the researcher understand the perceptions of the participants.

The survey developed and utilized by the researcher for this study was
Perceptions of Latino Students in the Academic Achievers Program Regarding Non-Cognitive Factors and Other Potential Factors for College Enrollment and Graduation Survey. The survey consists of 58 questions divided into three parts. The areas assessed in this survey are similar to other student engagement surveys administered to college students (Slate, LaPrairie, Schulte, & Onwuegbuzie, 2010). The instrument developed for the study is further described in the next section.

Instrumentation

In reviewing the literature, the researcher identified and compared assessments currently being used to research students' college experiences. One instrument that aligned with the purpose of the study was created and used by Davila (2011) *Supports for and Barriers to Program Completion for Hispanic Students Enrolled in Community College Questionnaire* based on the literature regarding student engagement, student on-time graduation, and students' views of effective college faculty. The participants in Davila's study were Latino community college students. Davila's instrument was based on the questionnaire completed by Edwards (2007), *Supports for and Barriers to On-Time Graduation as perceived by African American Undergraduate Students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Historically White Colleges and Universities.* The participants in Edward's study were African American students enrolled in four-year universities. The *National Survey for Student Engagement* (NSSE) (2015) was reviewed because it assesses students' experiences in undergraduate schools across the United States. Universities use the data from the survey to identify aspects of

the undergraduate experience inside and outside the classroom that can be improved

through changes in policies and practices (NSSE, 2015).

The survey developed and utilized by the researcher for this study was

Perceptions of Latino Students in the Academic Achievers Program Regarding Non-

Cognitive Factors and Other Potential Factors for College Enrollment and Graduation

Survey. The survey consisted of 58 questions divided into three parts. The three parts

are: Part I- Demographic Data, Part II- Open-ended Questions (Other Potential Factors

for College Enrollment and Graduation), and Part III- Open-ended Questions (Concepts

of Non-Cognitive Factors for College Enrollment and Graduation).

Part I included questions 1-11 regarding participants' gender, years of

participation in AAP, status of participation in AAP (current or former), indication of

whether participants graduated from college or not during their participation in AAP,

parents' level of education, marital and employment status during enrollment in AAP,

and number of children during enrollment in AAP and how many hours of childcare were

the participants required to provide, if any. Part II included open-ended questions 12-18

regarding other potential factors for college enrollment and graduation to assess current

and former participants' perceptions of elements which encouraged them to complete the

program and graduate from college or not. Part III included open-ended questions 19-58

which addressed the participants' use and perceptions of importance of several university

services. The services include: (a) advising-academic and financial; counseling services-

career, emotional, and cultural; and academic tutoring; (b) participants' perceptions of

cognitive and personal traits of college faculty; (c) academic challenge (d) job placement

service; (e) opportunities for students to connect with academic groups on campus; (f)

professors' communication skills.

The areas assessed in this survey are similar to other student engagement surveys

administered to college students (Slate, LaPrairie, Schulte, & Onwuegbuzie, 2010). The

open-ended questions from Part II and Part III of the survey were used as catalysts to

conduct the focus group session with the selected participants after the administration of

the survey. The focus group session provided opportunities for the participants to share

examples and scenarios of situations and incidences that they experienced while enrolled

in AAP, thus providing the researcher with more knowledge about distinct feelings and

beliefs of the participants through open-ended dialogue. The researcher took written

notes during the focus group session.

Reliability and Validity

After modifying the *Supports for and Barriers to Program Completion for*

Hispanic Students Enrolled in Community College Questionnaire (Davila, 2011) and

Supports for and Barriers to On-Time Graduation as Perceived by African American

Undergraduate Students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Historically

White Colleges and Universities Questionnaire (Edwards, 2007) to create *Perceptions of*

Latino Students in the Academic Achievers Program Regarding Non-Cognitive Factors

and Other Potential Factors for College Enrollment and Graduation Survey, the

researcher developed content validity for the instrument by having university professors

review the content for accuracy and completion. In addition, the survey was reviewed by

the researcher's dissertation chair and committee members who served as experts in

instrument design and retention of Latino students at colleges and universities.

The survey questions and the focus group interview session met the criteria for validity according to Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993), who explained that qualitative research must have the following: truth, applicability, value, consistency, and neutrality to be considered valid. This study met all five criteria in the following ways. The criterion of truth was achieved through the use of the participants' unaltered responses. The oral and written responses from the participants were typed into tables in a Microsoft Word document and coded into categories. Applicability was achieved in this study because the results may be applicable to Latino students enrolled in other colleges and universities. The criterion of value was met by examining the descriptions and perceptions of the Latino AAP participants regarding their perceptions of non-cognitive factors and other potential factors for college enrollment and undergraduate college graduation among current and former Latino participants in AAP. The researcher achieved consistency in the study through ensuring that every participant was provided the same questions on the survey and during the focus group session. Neutrality was achieved by reducing the researcher's bias when gathering participants' responses. A sincere effort was made to ensure that the researcher did not influence the participants' responses. The participants were made aware that the researcher is a former AAP participant. The researcher did not give the participants any positive or negative responses about her experiences during her enrollment in AAP or her personal and family background.

Additionally, the following criterion were used to address rigor and trustworthiness (Erlandson et al., 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) required of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Trochim, 2002). Credibility

entails establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participants in the research. The purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participants' eyes (Trochim, 2002). The participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the result. Credibility was addressed in this study by asking the participants to describe their own experiences. The students' abilities to write and review their responses and add any additional comments increased the credibility of their responses.

Transferability in qualitative research refers to the degree to which the results of the study can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. Transferability is primarily the responsibility of the researcher who must clearly describe the setting or context of his or her study (Erlandson et al., 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In this study, the researcher attempted to increase transferability by including detailed descriptions of the participants' demographic information, including race, gender, age, years of participation in AAP, degree status, and level of education achieved by parents. Enrollment data for the campus where the Center for Mexican American Studies is located and the AAP is managed was provided to better describe the context of the study, as recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Erlandson et al. (1993). In so doing, others can better determine the transferability of the results by analyzing the differences and similarities between their context and the context described in this study. The person who transfers the results to a different context is responsible for making the judgment of how sensible the transfer might be (Trochim, 2002). Specifically, others reading the findings of this study should examine the experiences of Latino students included in their study.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others (Trochim, 2002). Qualitative research tends to assume that each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study. There are a number of strategies for enhancing confirmability. The researcher can document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study (Trochim, 2002). Confirmability was addressed in this research by examining the common emerging themes from the participants' oral and written responses to the open-ended questions. The participants' verbatim responses were typed from written documents transcribed from oral responses then placed in tables in a Microsoft Word document, thereby ensuring that none of the data was changed or altered.

The participants' oral and written responses to the open-ended questions were direct quotes and served as a basic source of raw data in the qualitative evaluation. These questions revealed the participants' levels of emotion, their thoughts, their experiences, and their basic perceptions of non-cognitive factors and other potential factors for college enrollment and graduation among Latino students that participated in the AAP. The researcher invited a professor in education from a local university to the focus group session as observer to ensure that the process was fair and consistent.

Data Collection

Latino students who are current and former participants in the Academic Achievers Program in the Center for Mexican American Studies at the University of Houston's main campus provided the data for this study. Approval to conduct the study was sought and obtained from the director of the AAP prior to collection of the data (Appendices A & B). The current director of AAP provided contact information for the

current and former AAP participants. The completed Human Subjects Form was submitted to the Sam Houston University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs to obtain approval to conduct the study (Appendices A & B).

Ethical considerations for this study included concealing the identities of the participants and obtaining their permission. The consent form was included with the survey so that each participant understood the expectations before responding to the questions. As researcher bias is a consideration, the researcher minimized the potential for bias in the study by not intervening in the participants' communication unless there was a question. The participants were told that their responses would be kept for six months after completion of this research project, and then they will be destroyed.

Data was collected through two means: (a) survey containing demographic questions and open-ended questions and (b) focus group interviews using the open-ended questions from the survey and allowing participants to orally expand on the written responses. The oral and written survey responses were utilized from the purposeful selection of 16 current AAP participants, eight males and eight females, and a total of eight former AAP participants, four males and four females. The participants were notified by the researcher by U.S. mail, email, and/or phone to be invited to participate in the study. The participants were instructed to complete all of the 58 survey questions and return the survey to the researcher. All of the participants were invited to participate in a focus group session where they were allowed to expand on their written responses to open ended questions included in the survey. The focus group session was held at the Center for American Studies at the University of Houston main campus. The focus group interview allowed participants to embellish their initial responses to the open-ended

questions from the survey and to change or clarify any language the researcher may not have fully understood. In addition, the focus group interview allowed participants to share their personal experiences. Furthermore, the focus group interview allowed the researcher to read body language and establish a more personal relationship to enhance data collection. The focus group interview lasted 120 minutes. The oral and written participant responses were documented and analyzed to describe their perceptions of non-cognitive factors and other potential factors for college enrollment and graduation; and demographic information. Themes and patterns evolved from responses to the open-ended questions on the survey as well as the follow-up focus group interview discussion to help the researcher understand the perceptions of the participants.

<div align="center">**Researcher Bias**</div>

Researchers must be clear about their biases for stakeholders to be given the opportunity to decide what they think about all of the data that are presented (Heath, 1997). Researcher bias is a very important factor in qualitative research; therefore, the researcher used reflexivity to minimize the bias. With the use of reflexivity, the researcher performed a self-reflection on her personal biases and predispositions (Milinki, 1999). The researcher was an AAP participant who graduated from the university. Therefore, the researcher was careful not to insert her own feelings about her personal experiences into the responses of the participants. This is why it was so important to document the participants' responses verbatim. To analyze the qualitative data, the researcher reviewed the participants' responses, which provided insight into their perceptions. To appraise the situation, the researcher put aside personal biases and remained open-minded when gathering data for the study. Only through this level of

understanding can a researcher proceed effectively with a low level of bias and influence on the participants in a study.

Data Analysis

In this section, the researcher described the data analysis procedures that were used to analyze the following: (a) survey containing demographic questions and open-ended questions and (b) focus group interviews using the open-ended questions from the survey and allowing participants to orally expand on the written responses. The AAP participants' responses to the survey and structured interview questions were analyzed to address the three research questions to determine perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation. In addition, the researcher explored the current and former participants' perceptions regarding other potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed will increase the participation in the AAP of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area. The oral and written open-ended responses to the survey were typed and placed in tables that separated the responses by (a) current and former participants; (b) survey item numbers; (c) demographic data; (d) non-cognitive factors including services such as academic services (advising/planning service, accessibility of academic accommodations for students with learning difficulties, tutoring services, skill labs- writing, math, computer, opportunities for students to connect with faculty outside of class time); (e) counseling services (career, emotional support, cultural sensitivity); (f) job placement services; (g) financial aid advising; (h) child care services; (i) opportunities for social integration in a welcoming environment; (j) other potential factors include (intrinsic and extrinsic stimuli that may encourage students to enroll in college and

graduate); (k) academic expectations; and (l) cognitive and personal traits of faculty using a Microsoft Office Word document, printed, and reviewed by two sets of researchers. Both sets of researchers sorted the data, analyzed, organized, and reorganized searching for patterns and themes. The two sets of researchers compared data themes and categorizations and looked for common themes to determine which data needed to be re-categorized. Specifically, researchers coded the text to determine the perceptions of current and former AAP participants regarding non-cognitive factors and other potential factors that they deemed important in predicting college enrollment and undergraduate degree attainment among current and former Latino student participants in AAP. According to Bodgan and Biklen (2006), "Analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 157).

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented the specific methodology for the study. The participants were purposefully selected and placed in categories based on their participation in the Academic Achievers Program. The instrumentation section of this chapter describes the survey, which included demographic information and open-ended questions. Data collection and analysis procedures were discussed for two means of data collection: (a) survey containing demographic questions and open-ended questions and (b) responses obtained in focus group interviews using the open-ended questions from the survey and allowing participants to orally expand on the written responses. The findings are presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter the researcher provides findings of this descriptive study, in which qualitative research methodology of hermeneutical phenomenology was utilized to explore and more clearly describe the essence of how current and former Latino participants in the AAP perceived the importance and benefits of non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation. In addition, perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP were explored regarding other potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed would increase the participation in the AAP; college enrollment; and college graduation of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area. In so doing, the researcher gained knowledge as these participants shared their feelings, describing what they perceived and sensed through their own self-awareness and experiences. Approaching the study from this perspective allowed the researcher to explore the central underlying meaning of the experiences that contained both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memories, images, and meaning of these participants' responses (Moustakas, 1994). The research questions used to better understand the phenomenon were:

1. What are the perceptions of current Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation?

2. What are the perceptions of former Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation?

3. What are the perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP perceptions regarding other potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed will increase the participation in the AAP; college enrollment; and graduation of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area?

Descriptions of the Participants and Their Backgrounds

Current and former AAP participants' responses to survey questions 1-11 provided descriptions of the participants and their backgrounds. This information is documented in the text and further illustrated in Table 7. The current AAP participants included a total of 16, eight males and eight females. All current participants were 18-24 years of age. All of the participants have been in the program for three to more than five years, except one participant has participated for one year. Only one of the participants had a child to care for during her participation in the program. Her family took care of the child while she attended college. Several of the current participants reported that they worked while they attended college. Four out of eight females reported that they worked up to 15 hours per week; 1 out of 8 males reported that he worked up to 15 hours per week; one male reported that he worked up to 30 hours per week. The findings of the current male participants' parents' levels of education indicated that 7 out of 8 of the male participants' mothers did not finish high school. Only one male participant's mother finished high school. The findings indicated that 7 out of 8 of the male participants' fathers finished high school and one participant's father obtained a professional degree. The findings of the current female participants' parents' levels of education indicated that 5 out of 8 of the female participants' mothers did not finish high school. One of the mothers completed a GED and one completed a bachelor's degree.

The findings of the female participants' fathers' levels of education indicated that two graduated from high school; one obtained a professional degree; one obtained an associate's degree; one obtained a bachelor's degree; and one did not graduate from high school.

The former AAP participants included a total of eight; four males and four females. The former participants were in various age groups. In the male group, two were 31-35 years of age and two were 25-30 years of age. In the female group, two were 25-30 years of age; one was 36-40 years of age; and one was 41-45 years of age. All of the participants were in the program from five to more than five years. All of the former participants graduated from college. Three out of eight of the former participants reported that they worked up to 20 hours per week while they attended college. The findings of the former female participants' parents' levels of education indicated that two of the fathers graduated from high school and two did not graduate from high school.

The findings of the former female participants' mothers' levels of education indicated that three did not finish high school and one obtained a bachelor's degree. The findings of the former male participants' parents' levels of education indicated that two of the fathers graduated from high school and one attended college but did not graduate. The findings for the former male participants' mothers' levels of education indicated that four of the mothers did not graduate from high school. Both current and former participants were required to enroll fulltime to participate in the AAP.

Table 7

Demographic Descriptions

Demographics	Current Participants	Former Participants
Gender		
Male	8	4
Female	8	4
Age		
18-24	16	0
25-30		4
31-35		2
36-40		1
41-45		1
Yrs. of AAP Participation		
1 year	1	0
2 years	0	0
3 years	5	0
4 years	2	0
5 years	4	3
More than 5 years	4	5
Current AAP Member		
Yes	16	
No	0	
Former AAP Member		
Yes		8
No		0
College Graduate		
Yes		8
No	16	0
Parents' Level of Education		
Attended college but did not complete degree		**(Female)**
		Mother: 0
		Father: 0
		(Male)
		Mother: 0
		Father: 1

(continued)

Demographics	Current Participants	Former Participants
Completed an associate degree (A.A., A.S., etc.)	**(Female)** Mother: 0 Father: 1 **(Male)** Mother: 1 Father: 0	**(Female)** Mother: 0 Father: 0 **(Male)** Mother: 0 Father: 0
Completed a bachelor degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)	**(Female)** Mother: 1 Father: 1 **(Male)** Mother: 0 Father: 1	**(Female)** Mother: 1 Father: 0 **(Male)** Mother: 0 Father: 0
Completed a professional degree (M.D., J.D., etc.)	**(Female)** Mother: 0 Father: 1 **(Male)** Mother: 0 Father: 0	**(Female)** Mother: 0 Father: 0 **(Male)** Mother: 0 Father: 0
Graduated from high school	**(Female)** Mother: 1 Father: 1 **(Male)** Mother: 0 Father: 0	**(Female)** Mother: 2 Father: 3 **(Male)** Mother: 0 Father: 3
Completed a GED	**(Female)** Mother: 1 Father: 0 **(Male)** Mother: 0 Father: 0	**(Female)** Mother: 1 Father: 0 **(Male)** Mother: 0 Father: 0
Did not finish high school	**(Female)** Mother: 4 Father: 3 **(Male)** Mother: 7 Father: 6	**(Female)** Mother: 2 Father: 2 **(Male)** Mother: 3 Father: 0

Children during enrollment in the Academic Achievers Program
    Yes
    No
	
	Female-1
	Male- 0
		
		Female- 0
		Male- 0

Employed during enrollment in the Academic Achievers Program Yes	 Females- 4- 15hrs. per wk. Males- 1- 15 hrs. per wk. 30 hrs. per wk.	 Females-0 Males- 3- 20 hrs. per wk.

The researcher included the detailed descriptions of the participants' demographic information to possibly increase transferability of the research. As noted previously in Chapter III, transferability in qualitative research refers to the degree to which the results of the study can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Erlandson et al., 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). It is important to emphasize that it is the responsibility of those who chose to transfer the results to their context to make the judgement of how sensible the transfer might be (Trochim, 2002).

Research Questions One and Two: Non-Cognitive Factors

To address research questions one and two, responses from current and former AAP participants to a series of survey questions were first submitted to the researcher in writing by the participants and then the participants were asked to elaborate on their written responses in a focus group session. The oral and written participant responses were documented and analyzed to describe their perceptions of the importance and benefits of non-cognitive factors that they believe would lead to college enrollment and graduation. All participants did not respond to all survey questions (Appendix C). Non-cognitive factors are engagement efforts that capture students from the moment of their first interactions with campus personnel. The non-cognitive factors identified in this study were grouped into six categories. The categories are (a) Academic Services-advising/planning service, accessibility of academic accommodations for students with learning difficulties, tutoring services, skill labs-(writing, math, computer), opportunities for students to connect with faculty outside of class time, and fulltime enrollment in college; (b) Counseling Services-career counseling and emotional support through culturally sensitive counseling; (c) Social Integration/Welcoming Environment-access to

student organization services; (d) Job Placement Services-career advice; (e) Financial Aid

Services-advice regarding federal, state, scholarship, grant, and other funding

opportunities and connections for employment on campus for students to meet financial

needs; and (f) Child Care Services-all day care, before school, after school.

Frequencies and percentages of current and former AAP participants' responses to

survey questions were analyzed to determine the importance and benefits of the non-

cognitive factors within the identified categories. The survey questions which addressed

non-cognitive factors within the identified categories that yielded positive importance and

benefits based on responses for 70% to 100% of both current and former AAP

participants on the same survey question were determined to be the perceived themes of

the non-cognitive factors that lead to college enrollment and graduation. The non-

cognitive factors and the six categories that they are grouped in are discussed in detail in

the following paragraphs.

Non-Cognitive Factors: Academic Services

Current and former AAP participants responded to academic services survey

questions 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 30, 34, and 35. These survey questions addressed their

participation in the areas of advising/planning service; accessibility of academic

accommodations for students with learning difficulties; tutoring services; skill labs-

(writing, math, computer); opportunities for students to connect with faculty outside of

class time; and fulltime enrollment in college. Current participants' responses to survey

questions 19 and 20, which addressed their use of academic advising/planning services

indicated that, 14 out of 16 (88%) responded that they used the service (Table 8). Current

participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 3: "Yes, I will admit at the beginning I didn't like the advising/planning services because at that point in my life I didn't like people to help me about how I had to do things [*sic*]. Ms. Becky was the one to change everything for me when it came to advising because I trusted her like a son trusts a mother [*sic*]."

All eight (100%) of the former AAP participants' responses to survey questions 19 and 20 which addressed their use of academic advising/planning services indicated that the service was beneficial for them (Table 8). Their responses included the following:

Former Participant 4: "Yes I did use it. It was required. I don't think I would have landed where I am without the advising and planning services [*sic*]. When I enrolled I thought I was destined for law but after long talks with my advisor and the careers tests I realized education was my destiny!"

Based on responses from current (88%) and former (100%) AAP participants, academic advising and planning services were beneficial and important to students' success.

Survey question 21 addressed current and former AAP participants' responses regarding accessibility of academic accommodations for students with learning difficulties. Current participants' responses to this survey question indicated that 12 out of 13 (92%) of participants reported that accommodations were accessible; 2 out of 13 (15%) of participants were not aware that accommodations were available; and 3 out of 13 (23%) reported that they did not need the accommodations but they know that accommodations were available (Table 8). Current participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 1: "Yes it [*sic*] is. We as a group of the Academic Achievers Program have tutoring available. I have not needed this service but I believe it would be beneficial because they get [*sic*] one on one tutoring."

Former AAP participants' responses to survey question 21 indicated that 2 out of 5 (40%) of participants were not sure if accommodations were available and 3 out of 5 (60%) of participants reported that they were aware that accommodations were available for students with learning difficulties (Table 8). Former participants' responses to survey question 21 included the following:

Former Participant 3: "Yes they were easily accessible. If one was struggling with a subject, all we needed to do was go to the director and he/she would find help immediately. Not sure if they were for students not in the program [*sic*]."

The responses to survey question 21 from current and former AAP participants regarding participants' accessibility of academic accommodations for students with learning difficulties indicate that current participants appear to be more aware of academic accommodations than former participants. The total response rate to the survey question was greater from the current participants (12 out of 13).

Current and former AAP participants' responded to survey questions 26 and 30 which addressed usage of skills labs (writing, math, and computer). Current participants, 8 out of 13 (62%) indicated that they did not use writing and math skills labs. However, current participants, 10 out of 15 (67%) use computer lab services (Table 8). One participant reported that he uses his own computer. Current participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 2: "No. No, because in the Academic Achievers there is always somebody that knows how to solve problems [*sic*]."

Current Participant 3: "Freshmen and sophomore year the computer lab was my home. I studied, ate breakfast, lunch and dinner there. Sometimes they would extend hours for us during final [*sic*] weeks, I sometimes spent the night studying. AAP is my home and that is where I'll be at [*sic*]."

Former participants' responses to survey questions 26 and 30 indicated that, 3 out of 6 (50%) of participants used writing and math skills labs and 3 out of 6 (50%) of participants did not use writing and math skills labs (survey question 26) (Table 8). Six out of 6 (100%) former participants that responded to survey question 30 shared that they used computer lab services (Table 7). Their responses to survey questions 26 and 30 included the following:

Former Participant 3: "No, I did not use these services. I didn't use them because the program [*sic*] offered a lot of help in these areas. The director would schedule times for tutors to come meet with us at the Center."

Former Participant 4: "Yes, yes-we didn't have computers in our dorms and CMAS closed eventually in the evenings but the computer labs on campus were open later than normal office hours [*sic*]."

Based on current and former AAP participants' responses, both groups did not use writing and math skills labs (current participants- 62% and former participants-50%). According to the participants, if they needed help in academic areas the AAP staff provided assistance. Many participants used the computers on campus. Some used the

computers in the Center for Mexican American Studies and some used the computers in other labs on campus.

Current and former AAP participants responded to survey question 25 which addressed peer or other tutoring services. Current participant responses to this survey question indicated that 13 out of 16 (81%) of participants used peer or other tutoring services (Table 8). Three out of 16 (19%) of participants did not use the services. Current participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 2: "Yes. It was beneficial because the tutor made me understand the topics easier, and he made sure I understood"

Seven (100%) of former AAP participants that responded to survey question 25 stated that they used peer or other tutoring services (Table 8). Their responses included the following:

Former Participant 5: "Yes tutoring was beneficial. It [*sic*] really gave me an opportunity to learn properly the material I couldn't learn or understand during class [*sic*]."

The findings indicate that 81% of the current participants and 100% of the former participants that responded to survey question 25 stated that they utilized peer or other tutoring services which leads the researcher to believe that this service was important to both groups of participants.

Survey question 27 addressed opportunities for participants to connect with academic groups on campus. All 16 (100%) of current AAP participants indicated that opportunities to connect with academic groups were available to them (Table 8). Current participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 5: "Yes, there are many organizations here at UH [*sic*]. It is beneficial because we get to interact with other students on campus [*sic*]."

Six out of 6 (100%) of former AAP participants that responded to survey question 27 indicated that opportunities to connect with academic groups on campus were available to them also (Table 8). Their comments included the following:

Former Participant 4: "Yes, our group actually participated in one or more of the campus organizations and the HFCP group formed a community service organization that continued for several years after we left and we produced a play to highlight the plights of illegal immigration and assimilation of Latinos."

Both current and former AAP participants responded that they were active in academic groups on campus and both groups indicated that their involvement was beneficial. Survey question 34 addressed opportunities for participants to connect with faculty outside of class time. Current AAP participants, 10 out of 13 (77%) indicated that opportunities for students to connect with faculty outside of class time is easily accessible (Table 8). Current AAP participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 10: "Yes, multiple professors have participated in our AAP meetings (Mindiola, Cano) and it's helped me feel more welcomed and comfortable around them [*sic*]."

According to former AAP participants, 5 out of 6 (83%) reported that faculty were willing to meet with students and took the time to make sure that assignments were clear, however these meetings usually occurred during or after class or during scheduled office hours (Table 8). Their responses included the following:

Former Participant 4: "Yes, esp. [*sic*] b/c [*sic*] of the conf. [*sic*] room library & unofficial, official classroom & hall area set up with tables & chairs where participants could hang out with students, Dr. Mindiola, Mr. Cano, Eddie, & all the other CMAS staff."

Responses from current and former AAP participants to survey question 34 which addressed opportunities for participants to connect with faculty outside of class time indicated that both groups of participants viewed the faculty helpful and willing to work with them. Both groups consistently mentioned that usually they would first speak to their AAP advisors before seeking assistance from their classroom professors. The AAP advisors would help them make contact with the professor that they needed assistance from.

Survey question 35 addressed fulltime enrollment in college. Current AAP participants 15 out of 15 (100%) who responded indicated that they enrolled fulltime (Table 8). Their responses included the following:

Current Participant 6: "Yes, I think it is beneficial because it keeps me engaged and active in my community despite having to go to school more than 12 or more hours per week [*sic*]."

Former AAP participants 6 out of 6 (100%) who responded to survey question 35 also indicated that they enrolled in classes fulltime (Table 8). Their responses included the following:

Former Participant 6: "Yes, I was a fulltime student. I was focused on my studies, so that my parents would be proud of me [*sic*]."

Both current and former AAP participants' reported that fulltime enrollment in classes was beneficial because they graduated on time, maintained their scholarships and federal funds, remained engaged in their studies and active in college life.

Table 8

Academic Services: Current and Former AAP Participants' Responses to Survey Questions Regarding Non-Cognitive Factors that Impact College Enrollment and Graduation

Survey Questions (Non-Cognitive Factors)	Current Participants-*n*=16			Former Participants-*n*=8		
	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses
19. Did/Do you use academic advising/planning services? If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?	X		14 out of 16	X		8 out of 8
20. Were/are alternative times (e.g.: nights and weekends) for academic services such as advising, information about course work, career opportunities, and transfer policies available? If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?	X		14 out of 16	X		8 out of 8
21. Were/are academic accommodations for students with learning difficulties easily accessible? If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?	X		12 out of 13	X		3 out of 5
25. Did/Do you use peer or other tutoring services? If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?	X		13 out of 16	X		7 out of 7
26. Did/Do you use skill labs (writing, math, etc.) services? If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?		X	8 out of 13	X		3 out of 6
27. Were/are there opportunities for students to connect with academic groups on campus? If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?	X		16 out of 16	X		6 out of 6
30. I use/used computer lab services. If yes, was/is it beneficial? why?	X		10 out of 15	X		6 out of 6

Survey Questions (Non-Cognitive Factors)	Current Participants-*n*=16			Former Participants-*n*=8		
	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses
34. Opportunities for students to connect with faculty outside of class time is/was easily accessible? If yes, is/was it beneficial? Why?	X		10 out of 13	X		5 out of 6
35. I enrolled in college classes fulltime. If yes, is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		15 out of 15	X		6 out of 6

Non-Cognitive Factors: Counseling Services

Two types of counseling services were addressed in the survey. Survey question 22 addressed career counseling and survey question 32 addressed emotional support through culturally sensitive counseling. Current AAP participants' responses to survey question 22 indicated that 9 out of 15 (60%) used career counseling services (Table 9). Their responses included the following:

Current Participant 4: "Yes, very beneficial at the Bauer College of Business, very friendly and caring to all Bauer students (Called Rockwell Career Services) [*sic*]."

The current participants who did not use the career counseling service, 6 out of 15 (40%) indicated that they "did not have time [*sic*]"; they "did their own research [*sic*]"; and they "did not feel comfortable speaking to strangers about their problems [*sic*]." Only 13 out of 16 current participants responded to survey question 32 which addressed culturally sensitive counseling. All 13 (100%) participants responded that they were not aware that the service existed (Table 9). Former AAP participants' responses to survey

question 22 indicated that 7 out of 8 (88%) participants used the career counseling service

(Table 9). Their responses included the following:

Former Participant 4: "Kind of-and yes- [*sic*] the center provided most of our

counseling services. So if they didn't know the answer they put us in touch with people

who did right away [*sic*]."

Only 6 out of 8 former AAP participants responded to survey question 32

regarding the availability of culturally sensitive counseling. Responses from all six

(100%) participants indicated that they received this type of counseling from their

mentors in the AAP program (Table 9). Their responses included the following:

Former Participant 4: "Ms. Becky is my feeling. She has supported everybody

emotionally. I have seen everybody in her office, talking, laughing, crying, and you feel

the love [*sic*]. The AAP is love. I'm being serious [*sic*]."

Responses from current and former AAP participants regarding counseling

services indicate that both groups benefitted from the career counseling services.

However, the current participants are not utilizing the culturally sensitive counseling as

frequently as the former participants. The current participants indicated that they were

not aware that the service existed.

Non-Cognitive Factors: Social Integration/Welcoming Environment

Survey question 33 addressed opportunities for social integration in a welcoming

environment. Current AAP participants, 12 out of 15 (80%) indicated that opportunities

for social integration in a welcoming environment are easily accessible (Table 9). Their

responses included the following:

Current Participant 7: "Yes, we have meetings where all students can interact as well as community service at the end of the year [*sic*]."

Former AAP participants, 5 out of 5 (100%) responded to survey question 33 and shared that opportunities for social integration in a welcoming environment were easily accessible through the efforts of the AAP mentors (Table 9). Their responses included the following:

Former Participant 3: "Yes, there was a student lounge at the program center where we were able to interact with others [*sic*]. Sometimes went there to celebrate a success, our birthday, or simply just to hangout. We also interacted when we went to conferences, field trips or internships [*sic*]."

In many cases, social integration on college campuses includes involvement in student organization services. Therefore, survey question 31addressed use of student organization services. Current AAP participants, 8 out of 13 (62%) reported that they used student organization services (Table 9). Their mixed responses included the following:

Current Participant 12: "Yes, I was the president of MAES-Latinos [*sic*] in Science and Engineering. It has helped me develop professionally and academically [*sic*]."

Six out of 6 (100%) of former AAP participants that responded to survey question 31, use of student organizations indicated that they did not use student organization services (Table 9). Their comments included the following:

Former Participant 5: "I did not use any student organizations, I felt enough help was provided by Academic Achievers Program [*sic*]."

According to current and former Academic Achievers Program participants' responses to survey questions 33, social integration in a welcoming environment and 31, use of student organization services both groups depended on the mentors in the AAP for access to opportunities to become involved in on-campus student activities. They were not often involved in activities on their own.

Non-Cognitive Factors: Job Placement Services

Survey question 23 addressed job placement services. Current AAP participants, 10 out of 15 (67%) reported that they did not use job placement services (Table 9). Their comments included the following:

Current Participant 2: "No. No because I wanted to focus all my time in [*sic*] assimilating into college life. At the time I was not looking for a job [*sic*]."

Six former AAP participants responded to survey question 23 regarding job placement services. All six (100%) former participants indicated that they did not use a job placement service to find employment (Table 9). Two (25%) former participants were unable to work because of their legal status. Their responses included the following:

Former Participant 3: "No, I did not use the job services. The director of the program helped us with getting on campus jobs [*sic*]. The director also looked for internships outside of the campus [*sic*]."

Based on responses from current and former AAP participants job placement services were not utilized by participants.

Non-Cognitive Factors: Financial Aid Advising Services

Survey question 29 addressed financial aid advising service. Current Academic Achiever Program participants, 11 out of 14 (79%) responded that they used financial aid advising services (Table 9). Three out of 14 (22%) current participants reported that they did not use the financial aid advising services. One out of 14 (6%) current participants that responded reported that the financial aid advisors at the university were rude so he would try to use their service as little as possible. One out of 14 (6%) current participants that responded shared that she did not have to use financial aid. The responses from the current AAP participants included the following:

Current Participant 15: "Yes!!! So helpful. Help me buy parking permits, books, tuition/dorm [*sic*]."

Six out of 6 (100%) former AAP participants that responded to survey question 29 regarding the use of financial aid advising services reported that the financial aid advising services were beneficial (Table 9). The participants shared that the services helped them understand why funds were delayed; how to apply for additional funds since loans and grants were the only financial means available to attend school; and how the work-study program works as an option for financial aid. Some of their responses were as follows:

Former Participant 4: "Yes, of course it was beneficial between CMAS [*sic*] and FAFSA [*sic*] that's how I got through school [*sic*]."

As expected, based on responses from both current and former AAP participants, financial aid services were beneficial and important for both groups and both groups sought assistance for the service.

Some students meet financial needs in college by finding jobs on campus. Survey question 24 addressed opportunities for connections for employment on campus. Current AAP participants, 16 out of 16 (100%) reported that opportunities for employment on campus were made available and were beneficial (Table 9). Their responses included the following:

Current Participant 11: "Yes, I work in CMAS [*sic*] and it has been beneficial to help me be financially independent [*sic*]."

Six out of 8 former AAP participants responded to survey question 24 and all six (100%) reported that opportunities for employment on campus was made available to them (Table 9). Their responses included the following:

Former Participant 6: "Yes, the program always had new campus jobs available and shared the information with us [*sic*]."

Based on current and former AAP participants' responses opportunities for employment on campus were made available to participants through the assistance of the mentors of the AAP.

Non-Cognitive Factors: Child Care Services

Survey question 28 addressed the need for child care services as a factor that impacts college enrollment and graduation among current and former AAP participants. Responses from current participants, 12 out of 12 (100%) and former participants, 7 out of 7 (100%) indicated that child care services were not important regarding college enrollment and graduation (Table 9). Their responses included the following:

Current Participant 1: "No, I have no kids at the moment. I plan on having 4 if God permits but after graduating and having a job [*sic*]."

Former Participant 3: "No I did not use the child care services. I did have a baby while in the program but my mother in law took care of the baby [*sic*]."

Responses from the majority of both groups indicated that child care services were not an immediate need. There was one participant who indicated that she has a child however she received support from her family.

Table 9

Current and Former AAP Participants' Responses to Survey Questions Regarding Non-Cognitive Factors that Impact College Enrollment and Graduation

Survey Questions (Non-Cognitive Factors)	Current Participants-*n*=16			Former Participants-*n*=8		
	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses
Counseling Services						
22. Did/Do you use career counseling services? If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		9 out of 15	X		7 out of 8
32. Emotional support services through culturally sensitive counseling and mentor programs are/were available? If yes, was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?		X	13 out of 13	X		6 out of 6
Social Integration/Welcoming Environment						
31. I use/used student organization services often. If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		8 out of 13		X	6 out of 6
33. Opportunities for social integration in a welcoming environment are/were easily accessible? If yes, is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		12 out of 15	X		5 out of 5
Job Placement Services						
23. Did/Do you use job placement assistance services? If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?		X	10 out of 15		X	6 out of 6

(continued)

Survey Questions (Non-Cognitive Factors)	Current Participants-*n*=16			Former Participants-*n*=8		
	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses
Financial Aid Services						
24. Were/are students connected with on campus jobs to meet financial needs? If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		16 out of 16	X		6 out of 6
29. I use/used financial aid advising services. If yes, was/is it beneficial why or why not? If no, why not?	X		11 out of 14	X		6 out of 6
Child Care Services						
28. I use/used child care services? If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?		X	12 out of 12		X	7 out of 7

Summary of Findings for Research Questions One and Two

In this study, the findings for research questions one and two were determined by

documenting and analyzing the oral and written AAP participants' responses to survey

questions which described their perceptions of the importance and benefits of non-

cognitive factors that they believe would lead to college enrollment and graduation.

Seventeen survey questions addressed non-cognitive factors, which were grouped into 3

categories. Frequencies and percentages of current and former AAP participants'

responses to survey questions were analyzed to determine the importance and benefits of

the non-cognitive factors within the identified categories. The survey questions which

addressed non-cognitive factors within the identified categories which yielded positive

importance and benefits for college enrollment and graduation based on responses for

70% to 100% of both current and former AAP participants' responses on the same survey question were determined to be the themes of the non-cognitive factors that lead to college enrollment and graduation. Based on the participants' responses, themes were derived in the categories of (a) Academic Services; (b) Social Integration/Welcoming Environment; (c) Financial Aid Services.

In the category of Academic Services, five themes emerged. Current and former AAP participants agreed that the non-cognitive factors that were important and beneficial for college enrollment and graduation yielded the following themes: academic advising (current participants 88% and former participants 100%); peer tutoring or other tutoring services (current participants 81% and former participants 100%); opportunities to connect with academic groups on campus (current participants 100% and former participants 100%); opportunities for students to connect with faculty outside of class (current participants 77% and former participants 83%); and enrollment in college fulltime (current participants 100% and former participants 100%) (Table 10). In the category of Social Integration/Welcoming Environment, current and former AAP participants agreed that the non-cognitive factor that was important and beneficial for college enrollment and graduation yielded the theme, opportunities for social integration in a welcoming environment (current participants 88% and former participants 100%) (Table 10). In the category of Financial Aid Services, two themes emerged. Current and former AAP participants agreed that the non-cognitive factors that were important and beneficial for college enrollment and graduation yielded the following themes: connections on campus with jobs to meet financial needs (current participants 100% and

former participants 100%) and use of financial aid advisory services (current participants

79% and former participants 100%) (Table 10).

Table 10

Categories and Themes for Non-Cognitive Factors that were Important and Beneficial to College Enrollment and Graduation

Categories	Themes	Current Participants' Responses %	Former Participants' Responses %
Academic Services			
	1. academic advising	88	100
	2. peer tutoring or other tutoring services	81	100
	3. opportunities to connect with academic groups on campus	100	100
	4. opportunities for students to connect with faculty outside of class	77	83
	5. enrolled in college fulltime	100	100
Social Integration/Welcoming Environment			
	1. opportunities for social integration in a welcoming environment	80	100
Financial Aid Services			
	1. connections on campus with jobs to meet financial needs	100	100
	2. used financial aid advisory services	79	100

Research Question Three: Other Potential Factors

To address research question three, responses from current and former AAP

participants to a series of survey questions first submitted to the researcher in writing by

the participants and then the participants were asked to elaborate on their written

responses in a focus group session. The questions addressed other potential factors,

which are intrinsic and extrinsic stimuli that may encourage students to enroll in college and graduate. All participants did not respond to all survey questions (Appendix C).

In an effort to identify other potential factors that current and former participants may perceive as important and beneficial regarding AAP participation; college enrollment; and graduation, they were provided a series of open ended survey questions, which they responded to freely without prompts. The survey questions included the following:

Survey Questions 12 and 14: What factors of the AAP do you feel encouraged you to enroll in college?

Survey Questions 13 and 15: What factors are in place in the AAP that will ensure your undergraduate college graduation?

Survey Questions 17 and 18: What factors do you believe, if appropriately addressed will increase participation in the AAP; college enrollment; and college graduation of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area?

In addition, the current and former participants were provided structured survey questions with prompts to assist them in identifying other potential factors, which they perceived as important and beneficial regarding AAP participation; college enrollment; and graduation. Survey questions 37 through 46 addressed the category of Academic Challenges/Expectations. The Academic Challenges/Expectations category included questions, which addressed high academic expectations for students. Survey questions 48 through 56 addressed the category of College Faculty. The College Faculty category

included questions, which addressed participants' perceptions of cognitive and personal traits of college faculty.

Frequencies and percentages of current and former AAP participants' responses to survey questions were analyzed to determine the importance and benefits of the other potential factors regarding AAP participation; college enrollment; and graduation. The survey questions which addressed other potential factors that yielded positive importance and benefits based on responses for 70% to 100% of both current and former AAP participants on the same survey question were determined to be the perceived themes of the other potential factors that lead to AAP participation, college enrollment, and graduation.

In the next section of this paper, other potential factors that may lead to college enrollment, and graduation are discussed. Participants were allowed to discuss freely and write their answers to questions that addressed factors related to college enrollment and graduation. They were also required to address survey questions and the responses were analyzed by frequencies and percentages.

Other Potential Factors that Encouraged Current and Former AAP Participants to Enroll in College

Fourteen out of 16 (88%) current AAP participants responded to survey question 12 and shared factors that encouraged them to enroll in college. The terms motivation/encouragement occurred 12 times (86%) in the responses of current participants (Table 11). Current participants' responses that addressed the theme of motivation/encouragement included the following:

Current Participant 7: "What encouraged me the most to be part of the AAP was the ability to have people who I could rely on academically and emotionally from students as well as staff [*sic*]."

Terms that described financial services occurred 11 times (79%) in current participants' responses (Table 11). Current participants' responses that addressed the theme of financial services included the following:

Current Participant 8: "One of the biggest factors that AAP provided for me to come and study here at UH [*sic*] was the huge amount of support that they provide. Not just financially but mentally as well, from the director to the many students that I met here not once have I felt that I was alone here at UH [*sic*]."

Six out of 8 (75%) of former AAP participants responded to survey question 14 and shared factors that encouraged them to enroll in college. The term motivation/encouragement occurred five times (83%) in the former participants' responses (Table 11). Former participants' responses that addressed the theme of motivation/encouragement included the following:

Former Participant 6: "The motivation received by my mentors and by Rebecca Trevino. Before, being part of the program I never imagined being able to attend college, or pay for it [*sic*]. I knew my parents were not financially stable to help in my pursuit of a higher education. Another factor was that I was undocumented and unaware of the possibility of attending college until explained and encouraged by Rebecca Trevino"/.

Terms describing academic services (tutoring) occurred six times (100%) in the former participants' responses (Table 11). Former participants' responses that addressed the theme of academic services included the following:

Former Participant 4: "Just the idea that someone who looked like me believed I could actually finish high school and attend college was my initial reason [*sic*]. Later, having mentors, tutors, someone holding me accountable helped me stay [*sic*]."

Terms describing financial services occurred three times (50%) in the former participants' responses (Table 11). Former participants' responses that addressed the theme of financial services included the following:

After reviewing the responses to survey questions 12 and 14 for both current and former AAP participants the words relating to motivation/encouragement (current participants- 86% and former participants- 83%) consistently appeared as an important factor that was beneficial to their enrollment in college. As a result, this topic became the theme that the managers of the program should monitor in order to recruit more students to apply to the program and enroll in college.

Table 11

Themes Based on Frequencies of Use of Terms in AAP Participants' Responses to Factors that Encouraged Current and Former Participants to Enroll in College

Themes	Frequencies of Terms Mentioned in Current Participants' Responses	Frequencies of Terms Mentioned in Former Participants' Responses
	Current Participants- $n=14$	Former Participants- $n=6$
Motivation/Encouragement**	12	5
Financial Services	11	3
Academic Services (Tutoring)	0	
	9	6

Other Potential Factors: Increase Participation in the Academic Achievers Program

Current and former AAP participants responded to open ended survey questions 17 and 18 in which they were asked to identify several factors that they believe will increase participation in the AAP; college enrollment; and college graduation of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area. Current participants, 15 out of 16 (94%) and 6 out of 8 (75%) of former participants responded to survey questions 17 and 18. The responses of the participants were varied, however one area that was consistently addressed by both groups was the need to ensure that information about the AAP is clearly communicated and that information is shared early and widespread. Responses shared by current and former AAP participants that support the theme of "sharing information" include the following quotes:

"Students knowing about the program-word of mouth [*sic*]";

"More sponsored social, professional, and site visit events at the beginning of our college career [*sic*]";

"Outreach to areas of the city like Spring Branch and Cypress Fairbanks districts [*sic*]";

Other potential factors reported by current and former AAP participants were not mentioned enough in this section to be considered themes, however some of the factors were mentioned in the literature or in the non-cognitive section of this study as important to students' college enrollment and graduation. These factors include: (a) continue offering a strong tutoring and mentor program; (b) remove obstacles to graduation; (c) maintain welcoming environment; (d) more emphasis on helping students decide on careers; (e) seek additional funding; (f) encourage students to get involved in organizations on campus; and (g) workshops on importance of college graduation.

Other Potential Factors: Academic Challenges/Expectations

Current and former AAP participants responded to a series of structured survey questions that addressed Academic Challenges/Expectations, which examined high expectations for students. Fourteen out of 16 (88%) current participants responded to survey question 37 and indicated that they were encouraged to put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions (Table 12). Responses from current participants included the following:

Current Participant 10: "Yes, it [*sic*] allowed my mind to practice problem solving skills and how to think through different perspectives to come up with a great solution [*sic*]."

Former participants, 4 out of 6 (67%) indicated that they were encouraged to put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions (Table 12). Former participants' responses to survey question 37 were as follows:

Former Participant 6: "As an education major, I was encouraged to put ideas and concepts taught in different courses during class discussion and assignments [*sic*]."

Current participants, 11 out of 15 (73%) responded to survey question 38 and reported that they were encouraged to include diverse perspectives in class discussions or assignments (Table 12). Current participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 2: "Yes it was beneficial because it opened my mind to increase my knowledge of other cultures, making me a more well-rounded/open minded [*sic*] person [*sic*]."

Three out of six (50%) of former participants remember being encouraged to include diverse perspectives in class discussions or assignments (Table 12). Former participants' responses included the following:

Former Participant 3: "Yes, I was, some professors wanted us to include our points of view on some topics because we all had different backgrounds. But it was not offensive to anyone in any way [*sic*]."

Current participants, 8 out of 14 (57%) responded to survey question 39 and indicated that they were encouraged to examine the strengths and weaknesses of their own views on a topic or issue on class assignments (Table 12). The current participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 10: "Yes because it [*sic*] allowed me to not think so biased on a variety of issues and to think from different perspectives [*sic*]."

Former participants, 4 out of 6 (67%) reported that they were encouraged to examine the strengths and weaknesses of their own views on a topic or issue on class

assignments (Table 12). Former participants' responses to survey question 39 included the following:

Current participants, 15 out of 16 (94%) responded to survey question 40 and stated they were encouraged to try to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from others' perspectives during class discussion (Table 12). The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 1: "Yes. I've always been open-minded and like to understand someone else's point of view [*sic*]."

Former participants, 3 out of 6 (50%) stated they were encouraged to try to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from others' perspectives during class discussion. Former participants' responses included the following:

Current participants, 10 out of 14 (71%) responded to survey question 41 and stated that they learned something that changed their viewpoint about an issue or concept during class discussions or assignments (Table 12). The participants' responses included the following:

Former participants, 4 out of 5 (80%) stated that they learned something that changed their viewpoints about an issue or concept during class discussions or assignments (Table 12). Former participants' responses to survey question 41 included the following:

Former Participant 3: "Things that I learned in class not necessarily changed my viewpoint but they did help me understand/learn things that I didn't know about [*sic*]."

Current participants, 9 out of 13 (69%) responded to survey question 42 and reported that they were encouraged to analyze the basic elements of an idea, theory, or experience (Table 12). The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 9: "Yes, through workshops, we are able to comprehend new topics and ideas by taking hands-on experiences [*sic*]."

Former participants, 3 out of 5 (60%) reported that they were encouraged to analyze the basic elements of an idea, theory, or experience (Table 12). Former participants' responses to survey question 42 included the following:

Former Participant 4: "Yes of course it [*sic*] was beneficial otherwise I wouldn't be where I am today [*sic*]."

Current participants, 13 out of 13 (100%) responded to survey question 43 and shared that they were encouraged to synthesize and organize ideas, information, or experiences in new ways (Table 12). Current participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 2: "Yes, because it allowed me to develop new ideas of my own that were sometimes better [*sic*]."

Former participants, 5 out of 6 (83%) reported that they were encouraged to synthesize and organize ideas, information, or experiences in new ways (Table 12). Former participants' responses to survey question 43 included the following:

Former Participant 4: We were exposed to so many lectures, speakers, authors & people from all over the US [*sic*] that we couldn't help but open our minds to all of the potential we had within ourselves, our culture & [*sic*] CMAS [*sic*] group."

Current participants, 12 out of 15 (80%) responded to survey question 44 and reported that they were encouraged to make judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods (Table 12). The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 5: "Yes, it [*sic*] made me express my opinions about that information and why I didn't agree and disagree [*sic*]."

Former participants, 3 out of 5 (60%) reported that they were encouraged to make judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods (Table12). Former participants' responses to survey question 44 included the following:

Former Participant 3: "I was encouraged to make judgements about arguments and it [*sic*] was beneficial because one would learn from the comments of the other people's point of view [*sic*]."

Current participants, 9 out of 13 (69%) responded to survey question 45 and reported that they were encouraged to apply theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations (Table 12). The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 4: "I see this [*sic*] in my accounting classes all the time. But most specifically in my summer/fall job where all they wanted was new/efficient ideas [*sic*]."

Former participants, 5 out of 6 (83%) responded to survey question 45 and reported that they were encouraged to apply theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations (Table 12). The participants' responses included the following:

Former Participant 4: "Yes, application of what I learned in the program was easy b/c [*sic*] we were provided with, supported by not just academic guidance, but emotional, psychological, social, emotional support as well [*sic*]."

Current participants, 14 out of 14 (100%) responded to survey question 46 and stated that they were encouraged to use information that they have read or heard to perform a new skill (Table 12). The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 9: "We discuss diverse literature and are encouraged to attend enlightening events [*sic*]."

Former participants, 3 out of 6 (50%) reported that they were encouraged to use information that they have read or heard to perform a new skill (Table 12). Former participants' responses to survey question 46 included the following:

Former Participant 4: "Yes, it was beneficial b/c [*sic*] it helped me to be able to present & [*sic*] give speeches, still nervous but no longer timid about this [*sic*]."

Table 12

Academic Challenges/Expectations: Frequencies of Current and Former AAP Participants' Responses to Survey Questions Regarding Other Potential Factors that Impact College Enrollment and Graduation

Survey Questions (Other Potential Factors)	Current Participants-*n*=16			Former Participants-*n*=8		
	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses
37. I am/was encouraged to put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussion. If yes, is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not? If no, why not?	X		14 out of 14	X		4 out of 6
38. I am/was encouraged to include diverse perspectives (different, races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussion or assignments. If yes, is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		11 out of 15	X		3 out of 6
39. I am/was encouraged to examine the strengths and weaknesses of my own views on a topic or issue on class assignments. If yes, is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		8 out of 14	X		4 out of 6
40. I am/was encouraged to try to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from others' perspectives during class discussion. If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		15 out of 16	X		3 out of 6

(continued)

Survey Questions (Other Potential Factors)	Current Participants-*n*=16			Former Participants-*n*=8		
	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses
41. I learned something that changed my viewpoint about an issue or concept during class discussion or class assignments. If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?**	X		10 out of 14	X		4 out of 5
42. I am/was encouraged to analyze the basic elements of an idea, theory, or experience. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		9 out of 13	X		3 out of 5
43. I am/was encouraged to synthesize and organize ideas, information, or experiences in new ways. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?**	X		13 out of 13	X		5 out of 6
44. I am/was encouraged to make judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		12 out of 15	X		3 out of 5
45. I am/was encouraged to apply theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		9 out of 13	X		5 out of 6
46. I am/was encouraged to use information I have read or heard to perform a new skill. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		14 out of 14	X		3 out of 6

Note. **Theme in the Academic Challenges/Expectations Category

The criteria for determining themes for the Academic Challenge/Expectations category of this study is based on the survey questions and responses from AAP participants in a focus group interview that yielded positive importance and benefits based on responses for 70% to 100% of both current and former Academic Achievers Program participants on the same survey question. The findings indicated that two areas emerged as themes in the category of Academic Challenge/Expectations: (a) learned something during class discussion or class assignments that changed my view point about an issue or concept (current participants 100% and former participants 83%) and (b) encouraged to synthesize and organize ideas, information, or experiences in new ways (current participants 71% and former participants 80%) (Table 13). In addition, the findings revealed that the Academic Challenge/Expectations category is more important and beneficial to the current AAP participants because they scored 7 out of 10 survey questions/factors as important and beneficial with high scores ranging from 71% to 100%. Former AAP participants scored 3 out of 10 survey questions/factors as important and beneficial with high scores ranging from 80% to 83%.

Table 13

Themes for Academic Challenges/Expectations that were Important and Beneficial to College Enrollment and Graduation

Themes	Current Participants' Responses %	Former Participants' Responses %
Learned something during class discussion or class assignments that changed my view point about an issue or concept	100	83
Encouraged to synthesize and organize and organize ideas, information or experiences in new ways	71	80

Other Potential Factors: Cognitive and Personal Traits of Faculty

Current and former AAP participants responded to a series of structured survey questions that addressed Cognitive and Personal Traits of Faculty, which examined participants' perceptions of cognitive and personal traits of college faculty. Current participants, 14 out of 14 (100%) responded to survey question 48 and reported that their professors were knowledgeable (Table 14). The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 11: "Yes, because if I need guidance I feel I can ask my professors & [*sic*] expect a good answer, making it possible to determine my actions [*sic*]."

Former participants, 6 out of 6 (100%) reported that their professors were knowledgeable (Table 14). Their responses to survey question 48 included the following:

Former Participant 3: "Many professors were very knowledgeable and this was benefical [*sic*] because we learned a lot and if we had a question they were able to answer it [*sic*]."

Current participants, 10 out of 12 (83%) responded to survey question 49 and stated that professors of their classes employ instructional strategies, which match their learning styles (Table 14). The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 15: "Yes, sometimes they [*sic*] do walk-through [*sic*] activities or group activities that help me [*sic*]."

Former participants, 3 out of 6 (50%) stated that professors of their classes employed instructional strategies, which matched their learning styles (Table 14). Former participants' responses to survey question 49 included the following:

Former Participant 7: "Some professors used strategies to match my learning style but some didn't. For example, history classes were classes I struggle [*sic*] with because the professors will just lecture for an hour and our grade will depend on a midterm and a final exam. I really didn't like some of the basic classes that I took because of the fact that they [*sic*] were 300-400 students and we had to learned [*sic*] from an hour lecture and a book [*sic*]."

Current participants, 8 out of 12 (67%) responded to survey question 50 and shared that professors of their classes are sympathetic regarding students' academic and personal needs (Table 14). Their responses included the following:

Current Participant 16: "Yes; [*sic*] they understand [*sic*] that life happens & [*sic*] students are under a lot of stress & [*sic*] have many responsibilities [*sic*]."

Former participants, 4 out of 6 (66%) responded to survey question 50 and stated that professors of their classes are sympathetic regarding students' academic and personal needs (Table 14). Their responses included the following:

Former Participant 8: "Yes, almost all my professors were sympathetic with our studies and career goals. In many occasions, when I needed assistance with my homework or had questions regarding the lecture they were available to discuss the issue [sic]."

Current participants, 8 out of 13 (62%) responded to survey question 51 and reported that professors of their classes exhibit strong communication skills (Table 14). This score indicates that the participants experienced difficulty communicating with their professors. Based on participants' responses, the communication responses were due to

the professors being English language learners. The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 12: "I feel like many professors in engineering fields are smart, but they are not effective communicators [*sic*]."

Former participants, 5 out of 6 (83%) reported that professors of their classes exhibited strong communication skills (Table 14). Former participants' responses to survey question 51 included the following:

Former Participant 3: "Professors in my classes had strong communication skills and were very knowledgeable. This was beneficial because they were easy to understand and we were able to learn a lot [*sic*]."

Current participants, 11 out of 14 (79%) responded to survey question 52 and reported that professors of their classes are flexible (Table 14). The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 16: "Most professors were flexible and allowed me to earn a good grade in my classes even if I was having a bad day or week (personal problems) [*sic*]."

Former participants, 4 out of 6 (67%) reported that professors of their classes were flexible (Table 14). The participants' responses to survey question 52 included the following:

Former Participant 8: "Yes, almost all my professors were flexible to meet after class to discuss any question or concerns about the lecture [*sic*]."

Current participants, 14 out of 14 (100%) responded to survey question 53 and reported that professors of their classes are organized (Table 14). The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 10: "Most were [*sic*]. It helped me when organizing my own academic semester calendar [*sic*]."

Former participants 4 out of 6 (67%) reported that professors of their classes were organized (Table 14). Former participants' responses to survey question 53 included the following:

Former Participant 3: "Most professors were organized with lessons and materials. This was beneficial because time was not lost [*sic*]."

Current participants, 11 out of 14 (79%) responded to survey question 54 and reported that professors of their classes exhibit positive attitudes (Table 14). The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 1: "Yes. Most are friendly & approachable especially Hadi Ghajehni. He has been the best professor in attitude wise [*sic*] even though I failed his class. I still appreciate all his work [*sic*]."

Former participants, 6 out of 6 (100%) reported that professors of their classes exhibited positive attitudes (Table 14). Former participants' responses to survey question 54 included the following:

Former Participant 3: "Yes they did. Some would make us laugh and keep us engaged in class [*sic*]."

Current participants, 11 out of 13 (85%) responded to survey question 55 and reported that professors of their classes are fair (Table 14). The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 5: "Yes, they don't have preferences and we all have to work hard for our grades [*sic*]."

Former participants, 6 out of 6 (100%) reported that professors of their classes were fair (Table 14). Former participants' responses to survey question 55 included the following:

Former Participant 5: "Professors were respectful, which was beneficial to us because there were no interruptions in our learning [*sic*]."

Current participants, 14 out of 14 (100%) responded to survey question 56 and reported that professors of their classes are respectful (Table 14). The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 8: "For the most part, they have respected students. I've never witnessed anything close to disrespect towards students [*sic*]."

Former participants, 3 out of 4 (75%) reported that professors of their classes were respectful (Table 14). Former participants' responses to survey question 56 included the following:

Former Participant 6: "My professors were always respectful, and treated with respect by their students [*sic*]."

Current participants, 9 out of 14 (64%) responded to survey question 57 and reported that professors of their classes mentor students (Table 14). The participants' responses included the following:

Current Participant 4: "Most, do, one like my accounting professor, definitely

served as my mentor, she's the reason I love accounting [*sic*]."

Former participants, 3 out of 6 (50%) reported that professors of their classes

mentored students (Table 14). Former participants' responses to survey question 57

included the following:

Former Participant 3: "Yes, some of the professors mentored students and it

[*sic*] has been beneficial because they were encouraged to stay focused [*sic*]."

Table 14

Frequencies of Current and Former AAP Participants' Responses to Cognitive and
Personal Traits of Faculty Survey Questions Regarding Other Potential Factors that
Impact College Enrollment and Graduation

Survey Questions (Other Potential Factors)	Current Participants-*n*=16			Former Participants-*n*=8		
	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses	Yes	No	Frequencies of Participants' Responses
48. Professors of my classes are/were knowledgeable. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?**	X		14 out of 14	X		6 out of 6
49. Professors of my classes employ/employed instructional strategies which match my learning style. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		10 out of 12	X		3 out of 6

(continued)

Survey Questions (Other Potential Factors)	Current Participants-*n*=16			Former Participants-*n*=8		
	Yes	**No**	**Frequencies of Participants' Responses**	**Yes**	**No**	**Frequencies of Participants' Responses**
50. Professors of my classes are/were sympathetic regarding students' academic and personal needs. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		8 out of 12	X		4 out of 6
51. Professors of my classes exhibit/exhibited strong communication skills. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		8 out of 13	X		5 out of 6
52. Professors of my classes are/were flexible. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		11 out of 14	X		4 out of 6
53. Professors of my classes are/were organized. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		14 out of 14	X		4 out of 6
54. Professors of my classes exhibit/exhibited positive attitudes. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?**	X		11 out of 14	X		6 out of 6
55. Professors of my classes are/were fair. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?**	X		11 out of 13	X		6 out of 6
56. Professors of my classes are/were respectful. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?**	X		14 out of 14	X		3 out of 4
57. Professors of my classes mentor/mentored students. If yes is/was it beneficial? Why? If no, why not?	X		9 out of 14	X		3 out of 6

Note. **Theme in the Cognitive and Personal Traits of Faculty Category

The criteria for determining themes for the Cognitive and Personal Traits of Faculty category of this study is based on the survey questions that yielded positive importance and benefits based on responses for 70% to 100% of both current and former Academic Achievers Program participants on the same survey question. The findings indicated that four areas emerged as themes in the category of Cognitive and Personal Traits of Faculty (Table 15): (a) professors of my classes were knowledgeable (current participants 100% and former participants 100%); (b) professors of my classes exhibited positive attitudes (current participants 79% and former participants 100%); (c) professors of my classes were fair (current participants 85% and former participants 100%); and (d) professors of my classes were respectful (current participants 100% and former participants 75%).

Table 15

Themes for Cognitive and Personal Traits for Faculty that were Important and Beneficial to College Enrollment and Graduation

Themes	Current Participants' Responses %	Former Participants' Responses %
Professors of my classes were knowledgeable	100	100
Professors of my classes exhibited positive attitudes	79	100
Professors of my classes were fair	85	100
Professors of my classes were respectful	100	75

Summary of Findings for Research Question Three

In this study, the findings for research question three were determined by documenting and analyzing the oral and written AAP participants' responses to survey questions which described their perceptions of the importance and benefits of other

potential factors that they believe would lead to college enrollment and graduation. The

other potential factors included the following categories of factors: (a) Encouraged

Participants to Enroll in College; (b) Factors that Increased Participation in AAP; (c)

Academic Challenges /Expectations; and (d) Cognitive and Personal Traits of Faculty.

Twenty survey questions addressed other potential factors. Frequencies and percentages

of current and former AAP participants' responses to survey questions were analyzed to

determine the importance and benefits of the other potential factors. The survey

questions which addressed factors which yielded positive importance and benefits for

college enrollment and graduation based on responses for 70% to 100% of both current

and former AAP participants on the same survey question were determined to be the

themes of the other potential factors that lead to college enrollment and graduation.

The findings indicated that factors in the category of Encouraged Participants to

Enroll in College produced one theme: motivation/encouragement (current participants-

86% and former participants- 83%) (Table 16). In the category of Increasing

Participation in the AAP, sharing information emerged as the theme based on

participants' responses (current participants- 94% and former participants- 75%) was the

most important and beneficial factor (Table 16). In the category of Academic Challenges

/Expectations, two themes emerged (a) learned something during class discussion or class

assignments that changed my view point about an issue or concept (current participants-

100% and former participants- 83%) and (b) encouraged to synthesize and organize

ideas, information, or experiences in new ways (current participants- 71% and former

participants- 80%) (Table 16). The Academic Challenges/Expectations category is more

important and beneficial to current AAP participants because they scored 7 out of 10

survey questions/factors as important and beneficial with high scores ranging from 71%

to 100% as compared to former AAP participants who scored 3 out of 10 survey

questions/factors as important and beneficial with scores ranging from 80% to 83%. Four

areas emerged as themes in the category of Cognitive and Personal Traits of Faculty: (a)

professors of my classes were knowledgeable (current participants- 100% and former

participants- 100%); (b) professors of my classes exhibited positive attitudes (current

participants- 79% and former participants- 100%); (c) professors of my classes were fair

(current participants- 85% and former participants- 100%); and (d) professors of my

classes were respectful (current participants- 100% and former participants- 75%) (Table

16).

Table 16

Percentages of Responses for Categories and Themes for Other Potential Factors that were Important and Beneficial to College Enrollment and Graduation

Categories	Themes	Current Participants' Responses %	Former Participants' Responses %
Encouraged Enrollment-Other Potential Factors			
	1. motivation/encouragement	86	83
Increase Participation in AAP-Other Potential Factors			
	1. sharing information	94	75
Academic Challenges/Expectations-Other Potential Factors			
	1. learned something during class discussion or class assignments that changed my view point about an issue or concept	71	80
	2. encouraged to synthesize and organize and organize ideas, information or experiences in new ways	100	83
Cognitive and Personal Traits for Faculty- Other Potential factors			
	1. professors of my classes were knowledgeable	100	100
	2.professors of my classes exhibited positive attitudes	79	100
	3. professors of my classes were fair	85	100
	4. professors of my classes were respectful	100	75

Summary

Chapter IV provided an overview of the findings of the study based on the responses to survey questions and focus group discussions provided by AAP participants. The overall findings based on current and former AAP participants' responses to survey

questions and focus group sessions indicated that 16 themes embedded in seven

categories emerged (Table 17). The categories and themes were further identified by

Non-Cognitive factors-- engagement efforts that capture students from the moment of

their first interactions with campus personnel and Other Potential factors-- intrinsic and

extrinsic stimuli that may encourage students to enroll in college and graduate. (Table

17).

Three categories for non-cognitive factors were identified. The non-cognitive

categories were as follows: (a) Academic Services; (b) Social Integration/Welcoming

Environment; and (c) Financial Aid Services. Themes that both current and former AAP

participants endorsed emerged from each category. The themes for the Academic

Services category included academic advising, peer tutoring or other tutoring services,

opportunities to connect with academic groups on campus, opportunities for students to

connect with family outside of class, and enrolled in college fulltime. The Social

Integration/Welcoming Environment category theme included opportunities for social

integration in a welcoming environment. The Financial Aid Services category included

the themes, connections on campus with jobs to meet financial needs and used financial

aid advisory services.

Four categories of other potential factors were identified. The other potential

factors were as follows: (a) Encouraged Enrollment; (b) Increased Participation in AAP;

(c) Academic Challenges/Expectations; and (d) Cognitive and Personal Traits for

Faculty. Themes that both current and former AAP participants endorsed emerged from

each category. The theme for Encouraged Enrollment category include motivation

/encouragement. The theme for Increased Participation in AAP category is sharing

information. In the Academic Challenges/Expectations category, participants indicated that they learned something during class discussion or specified that they were given class assignments that changed the participants' view point about an issue or concept and encouraged him/her to synthesize and organize ideas, information or experiences in new ways. Concerning the themes for Cognitive and Personal Traits for Faculty category participants stated that the professors were knowledgeable, exhibited positive attitudes, were fair, and professors were respectful. The themes identified in each category were determined through analysis of frequencies and percentages of current and former AAP participants' responses (yielding 70%-100% positive response from both groups on the same question) to survey questions regarding importance and benefits of non-cognitive and other potential factors to college enrollment and graduation.

In Chapter V, the researcher provided discussion, implications, recommendations, and conclusions for the findings of this study. This includes, but is not limited to discussion of the relationship between the participants' responses to the essence of how current and former Latino participants in the AAP perceived non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation. The researcher also explored the perceptions of current and former Latino participants in AAP regarding other potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed would increase the participation in AAP; college enrollment; and college graduation of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area and the review of literature.

Table 17

Percentages of Responses for Categories and Themes for Non-Cognitive and Other Potential Factors that were Important and Beneficial to College Enrollment and Graduation

Categories		Themes	Current Participants' Responses %	Former Participants' Responses %
Academic Services-Non-Cognitive	1.	academic advising	88	100
	2.	peer tutoring or other tutoring services	81	100
	3.	opportunities to connect with academic groups on campus	100	100
	4.	opportunities for students to connect with faculty outside of class	77	83
	5.	enrolled in college fulltime	100	100
Social Integration /Welcoming Environment-Non-Cognitive	1.	opportunities for social integration in a welcoming environment	80	100
Financial Aid Services-Non-Cognitive	1.	connections on campus with jobs to meet financial needs	100	100
	2.	used financial aid advisory services	79	100
Encouraged Enrollment-Other Potential Factors	1.	motivation/encouragement	86	83
Increase Participation in AAP-Other Potential Factors	1.	sharing information	94	75
Academic Challenges/Expectations-Other Potential Factors	1.	learned something during class discussion or class assignments that changed my view point about an issue or concept	71	80
	2.	encouraged to synthesize and organize ideas, information or experiences in new ways	100	83
Cognitive and Personal Traits for Faculty- Other Potential factors	1.	professors of my classes were knowledgeable	100	100
	2.	professors of my classes exhibited positive attitudes	79	100
	3.	professors of my classes were fair	85	100
	4.	professors of my classes were respectful	100	75

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation. In addition, the researcher explored the current and former participants' perceptions regarding other potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed would increase participation in the AAP of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area. The data collected in previous program evaluations provided insights regarding the effectiveness of the program as it relates to students' academic progress (i.e., GPA, SAT scores, and graduation rates in four to six years, survey items regarding importance of academic goals, graduate school interest, AAP staff evaluation, and open-ended suggestions to improving AAP) (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). While a small section of the data collected showed that AAP participants viewed access to technology; access to books that were needed for course assignments; weekly tutoring; academic counseling; and leadership training as important factors that would contribute to their success in college, there is still a need to continue to ask participants questions that directly pertain to non-cognitive and other potential factors (University of Houston Office of Institutional Research, 2014). There is a need to continue to document evidence that non-cognitive and other potential factors make a difference in the percentage of Latino students who graduate from institutions of higher education. The findings of this study addressed three research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of current Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation?

2. What are the perceptions of former Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation?

3. What are the perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP perceptions regarding other potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed will increase the participation in the AAP; college enrollment; and graduation of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area?

The participants for this study were purposefully selected from the populations of students that are currently enrolled (108 on the rosters provided) in the AAP and former students that completed the program (82 on the rosters provided). The participants' contact information was obtained from the rosters kept in the Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS). Of these students, 20 current and 20 former (40 total) students were selected. The purposeful selection was conducted by choosing every other person on the list in each category to participate in the study. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003, p. 65), "The method of sampling in analytic induction is purposeful sampling. The researcher may choose particular subjects to include because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory." In addition, Gall, Gall, and Borg (2006) explained that the purpose in selecting participants in purposeful sampling "is to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied. A related purpose often is to discover or test theories" (p. 165). Creswell (2013) stated that phenomenology involves a study of "multiple individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon" (p. 112).

The criteria for selection included enrollment in the AAP (current and former) and graduation from college. Additional identifiers included gender, race, age, and year of program. Once identified from the rosters, the participants were notified by the researcher by U.S. mail, email, and/or phone to be invited to participate in the study. The survey was sent to all 40 (20 for each group) participants by email and U.S. mail. The participants were instructed to complete all of the 58 survey questions and return the survey to the researcher. All of the participants were invited to participate in a focus group session where they were allowed to expand on their written responses to open ended questions included in the survey. The focus group session was held at the Center for American Studies at the University of Houston main campus.

All selected participants did not respond to all survey questions and all participants did not return the survey to the researcher. Of the 20 surveys sent to the current AAP participants, 18 were returned. Ten of the 20 former AAP participants returned their surveys. Therefore, the researcher analyzed the data from the AAP participants that addressed the most questions on the surveys and were the same participants who volunteered to participate in the focus group. This purposeful selection of participants yielded a total of 16 current AAP participants, eight males and eight females, and a total of 8 former AAP participants, four males and four females. The oral and written participant responses were documented and analyzed to describe their perceptions of non-cognitive factors and other potential factors for college enrollment and graduation; and demographic information. Themes and patterns evolved from responses to survey questions as well as the follow-up focus group interview discussion to help the researcher understand the perceptions of the participants.

The survey developed and utilized by the researcher for this study was

Perceptions of Latino Students in the AAP Regarding Non-Cognitive Factors and Other

Potential Factors for College Enrollment and Graduation Survey. The survey consists of

58 questions divided into three parts. The areas assessed in this survey are similar to

other student engagement surveys administered to college students (Slate, LaPrairie,

Schulte, & Onwuegbuzie, 2010).

The theoretical framework for this study was based on the diverse perspectives

that Nora & Crisp (2009) refer to and are defined by what they call a race sensitive

theoretical framework to guide research on Latino students in higher education. The

components of the race sensitive theoretical framework include:(a) interaction of the

internal as well as the external environments on college campuses and their surrounding

communities; (b) re-conceptualizing student success by broadening definitions of student

success that are currently focused on cognitive outcomes; (c) infusing cultural sensitivity

in theoretical frameworks (Nora & Crisp, 2012). Research on Latino students has begun

to consider criterion measures that better reflect Latino cultures and/or the experiences of

diverse groups (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Quintana, Vogel, & Ybarra, 1991); and (d)

diversifying perspectives of culturally-relevant theory more identifiable to Latino

students through psychological, social, cultural, and environmental perspectives. The

researchers, Nora and Crisp (2012), believe that there is a need to incorporate non-

cognitive (e.g., psychological, social, cultural) measures in databases rather than simply

focusing on cognitive success outcomes (e.g., grades, retention rates, and graduation

counts) (Nora & Crisp, 2012). Responses from participants in this study included

findings other than GPA, SAT, and other cognitive findings. The findings for this study

addressed the participants' lived experiences during their participation in the AAP.

Demographic Information

The AAP participants responded to questions that yielded demographic

information. The demographic information revealed that among current and former AAP

participants most of them did not work while attending school and all of the participants

attended school full time. According to the literature, fulltime enrollment and no

pressure to work while enrolled in school are characteristics of retention that lead to

program completion (Shulock & Moore, 2007). The participants' responses indicated

that most of their mothers did not graduate from high school, however most of the fathers

obtained a high school diploma and a couple of the fathers are educated beyond high

school. In most circumstances, the level of the parents' education impacts whether

students enroll in college because of the parents' lack of knowledge about the processes,

and general logistics involved in getting their children into college (Noeth & Wimberly,

2003). In this case, these students were guided by AAP mentors who walked them

through every step of enrollment, selecting courses, majors, obtaining financial aid etc.,

to help them remain in college. The theoretical framework for this study is based on the

work of Amaury Nora and Gloria Crisp (2012) in which they make the argument that

more diverse perspectives are needed to examine Latino students' success in higher

education. Nora and Crisp (2012) support Zurita's (2004) call for researchers to allow

Latino students to tell about their own college experiences, to provide a rich description

of students' experiences and perceptions specific to the college environment. The AAP is

among the many successful programs implemented on a university campus to support students in enrolling in college and obtaining a degree.

Research Questions One and Two

The first and second research questions focused on AAP current and former participants' perceptions of non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation. Non-cognitive factors include services referred to as academic services (advising/planning service, accessibility of academic accommodations for students with learning difficulties, tutoring services, skill labs- writing, math, computer, opportunities for students to connect with faculty outside of class time); counseling services (career, emotional support, cultural sensitivity); job placement services; financial aid advising; child care services; opportunities for social integration in a welcoming environment. Nora and Crisp (2012), believe that there is a need to incorporate non-cognitive (e.g., psychological, social, cultural) measures in databases rather than simply focusing on cognitive success outcomes (e.g., grades, retention rates, and graduation counts). The findings for categories and themes for non-cognitive factors related to college enrollment and graduation are further discussed in the next section.

Categories and Themes for Non-Cognitive Factors That Were Important and Beneficial to College Enrollment and Graduation

Based on current and former participants' responses themes were derived in three categories for non-cognitive factors, Academic Services; Social Integration/Welcoming Environment; and Financial Aid Services. Each category has embedded themes based on participants' responses to survey questions and participation in the focus group. A total of eight themes were identified among the three categories of non-cognitive factors.

Academic Services Category- Themes for Non-Cognitive Factors

In the category of Academic Services, five themes emerged: (a) academic advising; (b) peer tutoring or other tutoring services; (c) opportunities to connect with academic groups on campus; (d) opportunities for students to connect with faculty outside of class; and (e) enrollment in college fulltime. The themes are discussed further in the following paragraphs.

Academic advising. According to the research, academic advising is one of the most important services that students must utilize to be successful in higher education settings and it is being under-utilized by students in my study. Academic advising is a process that synthesizes and contextualizes students' educational experiences within the frameworks of their aspirations, abilities, and lives to extend learning beyond campus boundaries and timeframes (National Academic Advising Association, 2006). Academic advising is integral to fulfilling the teaching and learning mission of higher education. Through academic advising, students learn to become members of their higher education community, to think critically about their roles and responsibilities as students, and to prepare to be educated citizens of a democratic society and a global community (National Academic Advising Association, 2006). Academic advising engages students beyond their own world views, while acknowledging their individual characteristics, values, and motivations as they enter, move through, and exit higher education institutions (National Academic Advising Association, 2006).

Academic advising has three components: (a) curriculum (what advising deals with), (b) pedagogy (how advising does what it does), and (c) student learning outcomes (the result of academic advising) (White, 2006). Academic advising is primarily based

on theories in the social sciences, humanities, and education (National Academic

Advising Association [NACADA], 2005; White, 2006). The curriculum of academic

advising ranges from the ideals of higher education to the pragmatics of enrollment. This

curriculum includes, but is not limited to, the institution's mission, culture and

expectations; the meaning, value, and interrelationship of the institution's curriculum and

co-curriculum; modes of thinking, learning, and decision-making; the selection of

academic programs and courses; the development of life and career goals;

campus/community resources, policies, and procedures; and the transferability of skills

and knowledge (NACADA, 2005; White, 2006).

Academic advising, as a teaching and learning process, requires a pedagogy that

incorporates the preparation, facilitation, documentation, and assessment of advising

interactions (NACADA, 2005; White, 2006). The relationship between advisors and

students is fundamental and is characterized by mutual respect, trust, and ethical behavior

(NACADA, 2005; White, 2006). Student learning outcomes defined in an advising

curriculum, articulate what students will demonstrate, know, value, and do as a result of

participating in academic advising (NACADA, 2005; White, 2006). The following is a

representative sample. Students will: (a) craft a coherent educational plan based on

assessment of abilities, aspirations, interests, and values; (b) use complex information

from various sources to set goals, reach decisions, and achieve those goals; (c) assume

responsibility for meeting academic program requirements; (d) articulate the meaning of

higher education and the intent of the institution's curriculum; (e) cultivate the

intellectual habits that lead to a lifetime of learning; and (f) behave as citizens who

engage in the wider world around them (NACADA, 2005; White, 2006).

AAP participants' responses to survey questions, which addressed their use of student support services such as academic advising/planning services indicated that among current participants they use the service because it is beneficial in helping them determine if they are on the right career path and to ensure that they are enrolled in the correct courses for graduation. The former participants shared that they used the academic advising/planning services as well. They reported that the service was beneficial because it helped them set their study schedule, remain on track for the career they selected, and make decisions about what to study. Current and former participants shared that advising/planning services through the university were only available during business hours however, mentors in the AAP were accessible for them whenever they needed assistance, (i.e.: weekends, evenings, and nights).

Peer tutoring or other tutoring services. Current AAP participants' responses to the survey question that addressed use of peer or other tutoring services indicated that participants use the services. A couple of participants did not use the services. The participants used the services in various courses and at various times. Sometimes the tutors were members of AAP. Former participants used peer or other tutoring services. Participants reported that the services are beneficial for proofreading papers, assistance in difficult courses, and assistance for students whose first language is not English.

Many potential students have not mastered the concepts and skills needed to be successful in higher education. Therefore, many universities and colleges are testing a number of innovative strategies to help those students to be successful in college (Excelencia in Education, 2015; Nomi, 2005; Ornelas & Solorzano, 2004; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, Terenzini, 2004). According to Houston, Eugeni, and Waxman, 2006,

to bridge the achievement gap found in prospective students, universities and colleges have pioneered development courses in mathematics, reading, writing and technology. Classes are offered on weekends and evenings, through distance learning, in shopping centers and with content that appeals to their constituency.

   Opportunities to connect with academic groups on campus. Opportunities to connect with academic groups on campus was a theme that was important and beneficial to the participants. Latino students' academic experiences in and out of class continue to be an area of concern. For example, although over 40% of first year Latino students enroll in some form of remedial coursework (Aud et al, 2011), it is unclear to what extent and under which conditions remediation may be positively or negatively related to academic success. In addition, findings reveal a need for clarity regarding the role of participation in various types and forms of academic and social activities in supporting or hindering academic outcomes (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005).

   Opportunities for students to connect with faculty outside of class. Current AAP participants indicated that opportunities for students to connect with faculty *o*utside of class time is easily accessible. They view faculty as always making efforts to make themselves available to students to make sure that they understand concepts taught in class. Participants reported that faculty would allow them to schedule meetings before and after their scheduled office hours; post information online; and communicate with them via email and text. According to former participants, faculty were willing to meet with students and took the time to make sure that assignments were clear, however these meetings usually occurred during or after class or during scheduled office hours. The

former participants did not expect the professors to meet with them at times outside of the scheduled office hours.

Enrolled in college fulltime. Current and former AAP participants shared that fulltime enrollment in college was important and beneficial. Attending college fulltime has been shown to be positively related to both persistence and degree completion among three national samples of Latino students (Alfonso, 2006; Arbona & Nora, 2007; Crisp & Nora, 2010). Interviews with counselors at a Hispanic serving community college in California indicated that the most consistent barrier to the transfer process for Latino students was non-academic issues related to responsibilities. Castaneda-Sound, Blanchard, and Aguilar (2011) reported that Latino students attending a private Hispanic Serving Institution who worked while attending college found it challenging to juggle work and academic schedules. Working off-campus was also shown to make it difficult for students to connect with the campus community.

Social integration/Welcoming environment category- Theme for non-cognitive factors. In the category of Social integration/Welcoming environment, current and former AAP participants agreed that the non-cognitive factor that was important and beneficial for college enrollment and graduation yielded the theme, opportunities for social integration in a welcoming environment. Research on Latino students' enrollment in college and degree attainment can be enhanced by taking a more environmental approach that allows for indicators of support from other persons in the student's life, such as family, faculty, and peers (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005) and by focus on the access and conversion of various forms of social and cultural capital (Nunez, 2009). Furthermore, research specific to Latino students would be enhanced by the development

of theoretical models that account for the local context that may influence the knowledge and/or support that students need to succeed at a particular institution (Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, & Trevino, 1997).

Opportunities for social integration in a welcoming environment. Research on minority students has depended primarily on the use of existing databases, making it necessary to rely on ethnocentric definitions and conceptualizations of variables. Rendon, Novack, and Dowell (2005), Tierney (1993), and others have criticized the use of current theoretical models to study racial/ethnic student groups. Arguments on this issue center on the inappropriateness of variables to capture the complex differences, culturally and ethnically, of Latino, African American, and Asian American students. A good example is the incorporation of academic and social integration in current frameworks on student persistence. The issue is not whether those constructs are functional for all groups, but rather how the measurement of those constructs can capture the cultural and ethnic differences of all groups (e.g., how different groups socially integrate themselves on campus) (Nora & Crisp, 2012). "More elaborate theoretically-driven perspectives that truly capture the experiences of minority students are still needed as well as the re-measurement (quantitatively) of established variables in current models" (Nora & Crisp, 2012, p.14).

Current AAP participants indicated that opportunities for social integration in a welcoming environment are easily accessible. They reported that these opportunities are provided through events sponsored by the AAP mentors. The participants stated that the mentors made sure that the new students met other students and made friends; they assisted students in determining their career paths; they organized community service

events; they organized events where students could meet faculty; they organized events every month to promote diversity; and organized events and fundraisers where students interact and network. Former participants also shared that opportunities for social integration in a welcoming environment were easily accessible through the efforts of the AAP mentors. These participants reflected on times where celebrations for students' successes and birthdays were held in the Center for Mexican American Studies. Field trips and conferences were organized for students by mentors. Several participants shared that the Center was also used as a place that students could just "hangout" with each other and visit. Participants noted that the comfort that students felt in the environment was based on the welcoming reaction that they received from the mentors and the knowledge that students in the AAP were experiencing similar struggles therefore they could relate to each other when problems occurred.

   Financial Aid Services Category-Themes for Non-Cognitive Factors. In the category of Financial Aid Services, two themes emerged. Current and former AAP participants agreed that the non-cognitive factors that were important and beneficial for college enrollment and graduation yielded the following themes: connections on campus with jobs to meet financial needs and use of financial aid advisory services. Financial aid for attaining higher education degrees in the form of scholarships or grants is important to Latino students because Latinos are among the poorest of all United States residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Many Latino families lack the financial resources to fund college education. The family orientation of the Latino culture places the burden of working to assist in support of the family squarely on the shoulders of the males, even when they are enrolled in college full or part-time. Also, many Latino families typically

believe that healthy young males should enter the workforce as soon as possible. Some

Latino males associate work with self-respect (Carter, 2005). This philosophy is in direct

conflict with the realities of going to college, therefore Latino students often feel pulled

in different directions. They may want to go to school, and their parents may want them

to, but lack of finances and family loyalty, as well as self-generated feelings of guilt

about not working, may conspire against that goal. Family or internal pressure to bring in

income may encourage young Latino males to defer college enrollment (Hertert &

Teague, 2003).

Connections on campus with jobs to meet financial needs. One of the most

interesting environmental factors that affect retention is holding a part-time job on

campus (Astin, 1999). Although it might seem that working while attending college

takes time and energy away from academic pursuits, part-time employment in an on-

campus job actually facilitates retention. Apparently such work, which also includes

work-study combinations, operates in much the same way as residential living. The

student is spending time on the campus, thus increasing the likelihood that he or she will

come into contact with other students, professors, and college staff (Astin, 1999). On a

more subtle psychological level, relying on the college as a source of income can result in

a greater sense of attachment to the college (Astin, 1999). Retention suffers, however, if

the student works off campus at a full-time job because the student is spending

considerable time and energy on nonacademic activities that are usually unrelated to

student life. Full-time work off campus decreases the time and energy that the student

can devote to studies and other campus activities (Astin, 1999).

Used financial aid advisory services. Socioeconomic conditions are related to the educational experiences of Latino students, as more than a quarter (27%) of Latino children in the United States live in poverty compared to 10% of White children (Aud, Fox, & Kewal Ramani, 2010). Overall, Latino households own less than 10 cents for every dollar in wealth owned by White households (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). A disproportionate percentage of Latino students must rely on grants and loans to receive federal aid when compared to other groups, they receive the lowest average amount of any ethnic group (Santiago & Cunningham, 2005).

Current and former AAP participants used financial aid advisory services. Based on responses to the survey, current AAP participants reported that these services were beneficial because they provided assistance in completing financial aid paperwork; answers to questions about federal funds; offered directions on how to file financial aid paperwork; delivered options for sources of financial aid; and how to use funds to buy books, parking permits, tuition, dorm, work study, etc. The three current participants that did not use the financial aid advising services reported that the AAP mentors provided the financial aid information needed. Six former participants responded to the survey questions regarding the use of financial aid advising services. They all indicated that the services helped them understand the paperwork. The one participant that did not use the services provided by the University, did use information that was provided by the AAP mentors.

Research Question Three

The third research question focused on AAP current and former participants' perceptions of other potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed would

increase participation in the AAP; college enrollment; and graduation of low income, first

generation high school Latino students in the Houston area. Other potential factors

include intrinsic and extrinsic stimuli that may encourage students to enroll in college and

graduate. The questions on the survey addressed the category of academic expectations

which solicited responses to address the following areas-were participants encouraged

to…: (a) integrate information from one course to another; (b) include their diverse

perspectives regarding race, religion, gender, political beliefs in class discussions or

assignments; (c) examine their own strengths and weaknesses in their views on a topic or

issue in class assignments; (d) analyze, synthesize, and/or organize ideas, information, or

experiences in new ways; (e)make judgments about the value or soundness of

information, arguments, or methods; (f) apply theories or concepts to practical problems

or in new situations and; (g) use information read or heard to perform new skills.

The second category addressed was cognitive and personal traits of faculty.

Participants were asked if they perceived their professors to be (a) knowledgeable; (b)

employ instructional strategies which matched their learning style; (c) sympathetic

regarding students' academic and personal needs; (d) exhibited strong communication

skills; (e) were flexible; (f) were organized; (g) exhibited positive attitudes; (h) were fair;

(i) were respectful; and (j) mentored students. Chen and Des Jardins (2010) support the

idea of including other potential data in the evaluation process for program improvement.

They suggested that, longitudinal datasets would be improved by providing full

information for observable and measurable variables that may change over time (e.g.,

family income, GPA, parental support). According to Nora and Crisp (2012), the

cognition-related outcomes do not occur in isolation of student attitudes, their values and

perceptions, and their academic and social behavior on- and off-campus (Nora & Crisp, 2012). The current and former participants in the AAP overwhelmingly agreed that without the support of the mentors in the program, their college experiences would have been much more difficult. The mentors assisted the participants through every obstacle that they encountered during their enrollment in classes.

Categories and Themes for Other Potential Factors that were Important and Beneficial to College Enrollment and Graduation

Based on current and former participants' responses themes were derived in four categories for other potential factors leading to college enrollment and graduation, Encouraged Enrollment; Increased Participation in the AAP; Academic Challenges/Expectations; and Cognitive and Personal Traits for Faculty. Each category has embedded themes based on participants' responses to survey questions and participation in the focus group. A total of eight themes were identified among the four categories of other potential factors.

Encouraged Enrollment: Theme for Other Potential Factors. Current AAP participants shared factors that encouraged them to enroll in college and remain in college with the intent to graduate. Those factors include the positive attitudes of the AAP mentors during the interviews for participation in the program; continued support from the mentors through motivation and encouragement; teaching time management skills; financial and academic assistance; and emotional support. Former participants shared the following factors that encouraged them to enroll in college with the intent to graduate: intrinsic motivation; financial aid; access to tutors; meeting students who could relate to the same issues of being the first in the family to attend college; and motivation

and encouragement provided by the mentors. Motivation was the primary theme that was

derived from this category.

    Motivational/Encouragement. Motivation and encouragement are very

important and beneficial to the participants based on their responses. Supportive

relationships contribute in meaningful ways to Latino students' grades and persistence

decisions. Researchers revealed the positive impact of role models, mentors, parents,

peers, and Latino communities on campus (Arana et al, 2011; Arellano & Padilla, 1996;

Barajas & Pierce, 2001; Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; Cejda, Casparis, & Rhodes, 2002;

Hernandez, 2000; Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006). Research by Hernandez (2000) indicated

that if the Latino community is created at any campus, the Latino student will benefit.

Mentoring experiences, including on campus ties to professors, were shown to be

positively related to Latino students' grades in college (Bordes, Sand, Arredondo,

Robinson-Kurpius, & Rayle, 2006; Fisher, 2007).

    Increase Participation in the AAP: Theme for Other Potential Factors. In the

category of increasing participation in the AAP, sharing information was the theme. The

participants believed that more work needs to be done to get information out about the

program in earlier grades. They believed that the discussion about attending college

should begin in elementary school not just in high school. One of the members of the

first cohort of participants of the AAP mentioned that their cohort began in junior high

school. Lately, the students have been recruited after they have entered high school

which may be too late. Another recommendation from participants is to solicit assistance

from successful former graduates of the program to be spokes-persons for the program.

The last recommendation is to reach out to districts outside of the Houston Independent

School District, but still within the Houston area.

      Academic Challenges/Expectations: Themes for Other Potential Factors.

Academic success of Latino students in college can be associated with equal access and

differential instruction provided by K-12 schooling (Garcia & Bayer, 2005). Latino

students must deal with social phenomena such as racism and language stigmas

throughout the educational system (Caldwell & Siwater, 2003). In contrast to White

students, it has been reported that Latino students are more likely to be tracked into

vocational or lower ability coursework, which requires less rigorous education (Meier &

Stewart, 1991; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2005). A disproportionate

number of Latino students live in low-income neighborhoods and are therefore more

likely to attend poorly resourced public schools (Contreras, 2005), which may negatively

affect instruction quality (Vartanian & Gleason, 1991). Therefore, many Latino students

begin postsecondary education with lower levels of "college readiness" (Berkner &

Chavez, 1997).

      Crisp, Taggart, and Nora, 2014 reviewed findings that drew attention to the

relationship between students' confidence and in performing academic tasks and

academic outcomes for Latino students including grades, persistence decisions, and the

odds of degree completion. For example, Arellano and Padilla, 1996 conducted

qualitative interviews with students attending a highly selective institution indicated that

Latino students' positive views of the world and ability to succeed supported academic

success outcomes. In addition, quantitative evidence was found linking measures of

students' academic self-confidence or self-efficacy to course failure, grades, persistence

decisions, and degree completion (Bordes-Edgar, Arrendondo, Robinson-Kurpius, & Rund, 2011; Cole, 2008; Massey, Charles, Lundy, & Fischer, 2003; Rodriguez, 1996; Strange, 1999; Torres & Solberg, 2000). For example, a quantitative study using the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen by Massey et al. (2003) revealed that Latino students who met the criteria for stereotype vulnerability were at higher risk of course failure. Massey et al. (2003) defined stereotype vulnerability as being unusually self-conscious of teachers and expressing reservations about academic abilities or expressing doubts about Latino abilities. It is appropriate and expected that institutions of higher education work toward achieving educational quality for the Latino student population (Villalpando, 2004). According to responses, both current and former AAP participants indicated that it was important and beneficial that they were encouraged to learn something during discussion or class assignments that changed their view point about an issue or concept and to synthesize and organize ideas, information or experiences in new ways.

> ***Cognitive and Personal Traits of Faculty: Themes for Other Potential Factors.***
The category of cognitive and personal traits of faculty yielded four themes: (a) professors of my classes were knowledgeable; (b) professors of my classes exhibited positive attitudes (c) professors of my classes were fair; and (d) professors of my classes were respectful. Several researchers support the belief that traits/qualities that professors possess impact the classroom climate and in turn students' classroom success may be impacted (Gallien & Peterson, 2005: Phillips, 2005). A positive classroom environment is vital for assisting students in being successful and feel included in class. Interactive faculty members are beneficial to the learning experiences for students. Mentoring is one

way in which faculty and students may develop relationships. These interactions may involve faculty and students collaborating on research projects, presentations for conferences, or summer internship programs (Phillips, 2005).

Research that supports Phillips (2005) was completed by Gallien and Peterson (2005). These researchers created a list of qualities that professors must possess to create the ideal learning environment:

1. caring attitude;

2. possessing a feeling of responsibility for student success;

3. relating course material to students' cultural backgrounds; and

4. possessing a passion, enthusiasm, and mastering of course content. (p. 16)

Slate, LaPrairie, Schulte, and Onwuegbuzie (2011) added more qualities to the characteristics of effective college faculty members through a mixed method analysis of the perceptions of 615 predominantly Hispanic students enrolled in courses at two Hispanic-serving universities. In their study, beliefs were identified that led to 29 prevailing themes:

1) knowledgeable; 2) understanding; 3) communication; 4) teaches well; 5) caring; 6) organized; 7) flexibility; 8) positive attitude; 9) patience; 10) experience in the classroom; 11) fair; 12) helping; 13) respectful; 14) open-minded; 15) builds relationships; 16) passion for the job; 17) service; 18) makes learning interesting; 19) uses different modalities; 20) fun; 21) motivating; 22) intelligent; 23) involving students; 24) being available; 25) friendly; 26) connects with real world; 27) listening; 28) creativity; and 29) challenges students. (2011, p. 332)

Of these themes, knowledgeable, understanding, communication, and teaches well acknowledged the highest endorsements and are congruent with student evaluations that are components of promotion and tenure decisions (Slate et al., 2011). These same themes are viewed as important by the current and former AAP participants.

Current AAP participants reported that their professors were knowledgeable. The participants believe that their professors helped them understand new concepts; they are challenging; they are caring; and help students think about their major. Former participants reported that their professors were knowledgeable. They believed they were great in their disciplines and current events. Current and former participants stated that professors of their classes employed instructional strategies which match their learning styles. Current participants shared that professors of their classes are sympathetic regarding students' academic and personal needs. Current participants reported that professors of their classes exhibit strong communication skills. Professors identified as not having strong communication skills had strong accents because English is not their first language. Former participants expressed that professors of their classes exhibited strong communication skills. Current and former participants reported that professors were flexible. Both current and former participants agreed that professors were organized. Current and former participants reported that professors exhibited positive attitudes. Current participants reported that professors of their classes are fair. Former participants reported that professors of their classes were fair. Current participants reported that professors of their classes are respectful. Former participants reported that professors of their classes were respectful. Current participants reported that professors of their classes mentor students. Former participants reported that professors of their

classes mentored students. Current and former AAP participants shared a few comments that they believed were very important regarding cognitive and personal traits of college faculty that impact college enrollment and graduation. The participants stated that professors' respectful behavior and positive attitudes impact students' academic performance; professors need to be understanding; and professors need to take time to mentor students.

Implications

Some benefits of higher education include increase in knowledge and skills and results in greater individual marketability, wealth and self-reliance which reduces dependence on public programs. As college completions increase, wages go up and state tax revenues go up, leading to a reduction in public expenditures such as Medicaid and corrections facilities. Individuals with postsecondary degrees and credentials are less likely to need public assistance programs or to enter the correctional system. Providing more information about the AAP from the participants' point of view regarding their experiences will provide the staff and mentors information to help improve program activities and recruit more participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study revealed perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the AAP regarding non-cognitive factors for college enrollment and graduation. In addition, the researcher explored the current and former participants' perceptions regarding other potential factors they believe, if appropriately addressed will increase the participation in the AAP of low income, first generation high school Latino

students in the Houston area. Consequently, the following recommendations for future research are addressed below:

1. Examine the perceptions of the AAP participants that did not graduate from college regarding the reason why they did not complete college;

2. Explore the plight of undocumented immigrants and the need to enroll in institutions of higher education;

3. Examine perceptions of AAP participant graduates regarding changes in actions/programs that would improve student retention;

4. Explore differences in perceptions among genders regarding supports for and barriers to on-time program completion;

5. More studies designed to address the need for changes in the university environments, including the development of innovative techniques and strategies to prepare a diverse body of students as well as talented professionals in the global market place;

6. Explore the differences in the engagement –outcome experience of first-time students compared to those who have moved beyond the first term; and

7. Conduct a longitudinal study so that the relationship between student engagement and attainment of students' ultimate educational goals can be better understood

8. Even though the researcher also focused on the importance of student/faculty interactions in the classroom, she did not focus on classroom instruction among different racial/ethnic groups.

Conclusions

In light of the changing and diverse demographic and economic landscape, the primary mission for universities has never been more important; universities exist to serve students. As the diversity of this nation grows and more students of color look to the nation's universities as the conduit to their academic and professional development, it is imperative that universities remove the barriers that limit access and persistence while at the same time finding more effective ways to ensure students' success through graduation. For many Latino students, the education provided at the university is the first step in their journey to earn degrees beyond the high school diploma.

Based on responses from participants in this study, the resources and planning that takes place in the AAP to address the individual needs of participants influenced their positive reactions to questions regarding their perceptions of non-cognitive and other potential factors. The researcher hopes that the findings of this study will serve as a tool to support AAP mentors and directors in their efforts to make decisions to provide effective educational services to all under-served student populations. The findings of this research may encourage AAP mentors to pay careful attention to most accurately and appropriately place students in learning environments that fit their educational needs. In addition, it is imperative that university faculty members are afforded opportunities to access ongoing professional development in order to understand how to work with under-skilled students in our ever growing multicultural society. This training must include effective teaching practices and address the cultural competence of the faculty. If enrollment in the university can provide participants with basic knowledge and skills,

then participants that complete the programs will become an asset to all in the community

in this ever expanding global economy.

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APPENDIX A

am Houston
STATE UNIVERSITY
A Member of The Texas State University System

Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
903 Bowers Blvd, Huntsville, TX 77341-2448
Phone: 936.294.4875
Fax: 936.294.3622
irb@shsu.edu
www.shsu.edu/~rgs_www/irb/

DATE:	April 12, 2016
TO:	Lisa Patenotte [Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Rebecca Robles-Piña]
FROM:	Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB
PROJECT TITLE:	*Perceptions of Latino Students in the Academic Achievers Program Regarding Non-Cognitive College Enrollment and Graduation Factors [T/D]*
PROTOCOL #:	2016-03-28503
SUBMISSION TYPE:	INITIAL REVIEW—RESPONSE TO MODIFICATIONS
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	April 12, 2016
EXPIRATION DATE:	April 12, 2017
REVIEW TYPE:	EXPEDITED
REVIEW CATEGORIES:	7

Thank you for your submission of your **Response to Modifications** for this project. The Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received **Expedited** Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure which are found on the Application Page to the SHSU IRB website.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All Department of Health and Human Services and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Sam Houston State University IRB's records

Sam Houston
STATE UNIVERSITY
A Member of The Texas State University System

Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
903 Bowers Blvd, Huntsville, TX 77341-2448
Phone: 936.294.4875
Fax: 936.294.3622
irb@shsu.edu
www.shsu.edu/~rgs_www/irb/

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. **Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of April 12, 2017. When you have completed the project, a Final Report must be submitted to ORSP in order to close the project file.**

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 936-294-4875 or irb@shsu.edu. Please include your project title and protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Donna Desforges
IRB Chair, PHSC
PHSC-IRB

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Sam Houston State University IRB's records

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON

Center for Mexican American Studies
Office of the Director

April 11, 2016

Re: Lisa Rodriguez Dissertation Research

To Whom It May Concern;

I am aware that Ms. Rodriguez Patenotte, doctoral student at Sam Houston State University, is interested in conducting a study about the Center for Mexican American Studies' Academic Achievers Program at the University of Houston. The title of her dissertation is, "Perceptions of Latino Students in the Academic Achievers Program Regarding Non-Cognitive Factors for College Enrollment and Graduation."

Please be advised, I give my approval, pending Sam Houston State University's approval from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. Please call or email if you should have any further questions for me.

Sincerely,

Pamela Anne Quiroz, Ph.D.
Director of the Center for Mexican American Studies & Professor of Sociology
paquiroz@uh.edu
(713) 743-3134

YOU ARE THE PRIDE
323 Agnes Arnold Hall • Houston, TX 77204-3001
Office: 713.743.3136 • Fax: 713.743.3130 • www.uh.edu

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Perceptions of Latino Students in the Academic Achievers Program Regarding Non-Cognitive Factors for College Enrollment and Graduation

My name is Lisa Rodriguez Patenotte and my faculty advisor is Dr. Rebecca Robles-Piña. I am requesting your participation in my study, **Perceptions of Latino Students in the Academic Achievers Program Regarding Non-Cognitive Factors for College Enrollment and Graduation,** which is the topic of my dissertation for the Doctor of Education Degree in Educational Leadership from Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX.

The purpose of this study will be to explore the perceptions of current and former Latino participants in the Academic Achievers Program (AAP) regarding cognitive related outcomes and other potential factors for college enrollment and graduation. Cognitive related outcomes are data identified in the literature as measures that are strongly correlated with improved postsecondary outcomes such as grades, retention rates, graduation counts, grade point average (GPA), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores (Nora & Crisp, 2012) and other potential factors are skills and attributes that have been identified as important to students' success and are driven by sound theoretical arguments (e.g., collaborative skills are important for future success) but for which reliable metrics have not yet been developed or tested independently of other factors (Hein, Smerdon, & Sambolt, 2013).

Information obtained can be used to improve the participation and success of the Latino/Hispanic students in the AAP at the University of Houston. While the previous data collected (grade point average (GPA), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, and graduation rates, survey items regarding importance of academic goals, graduate school interest, and AAP staff evaluations, provide insights regarding the effectiveness of the program as it relates to students' academic progress, the data does not directly answer questions pertaining to non-cognitive (i.e., financial aid, caring for dependents) and other potential factors (i.e., hours of employment, number of children, parental education) for college enrollment and graduation.

Your participation in completing the structured interview questions is voluntary and your consent will be to answer the structured interview questions in written form and then participate in in the focus group discussion. You may withdraw from this study at any time and there will be no consequences for failure to participate. There are no identifiable risks to answering the interview questions and the benefit is that the information will identify ways to help Latino students graduate from college.

The information collected will be held strictly confidential and no identifiers will be linked to you. The data collected may be published or presented as a compilation of data from several respondents. No specific identifiers of participants will appear on any report. Please know if you participate you may be asked questions by other people about the study. We will not be sharing information about you to anyone outside of the research team. The information that we collect from this research will be kept confidential. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. Only the researcher will know what your number is and will lock that information up with a lock and key. It will not be shared with or given to anyone. I will ask you and others in the group not to talk to people outside the focus group about what was said in the focus group. We will, in other words, ask each of you to keep what was said in the group confidential. You should know, however, that we cannot stop or prevent participants who were in the group from sharing things that should be confidential. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

What are my rights as a research subject?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call:

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs – Sharla Miles at 936-294-4875 or email ORSP at irb@shsu.edu

Version 2: April 8, 2016

Part I - Demographic Data

Please mark an **X** for the answers that *best describe you*:

1. **Gender:** ____Male ____Female

2. **Age:** _____ 18-24 _____ 25-30 _____ 31-35
_____ 36-40 _____ 41-45 _____ 46-50

3. **Years of Academic Achievers Program participation:**

_____1 ____2 ____3____4 ____5 ____more than 5

4. **Current member of the Academic Achievers Program:**

_____Yes _____No

5. **Former member of the Academic Achievers Program (also known as Hispanic Family College Project (HFCP), Urban Experience, etc.:**

_____Yes _____No

6. **Did you graduate from college while participating in the Academic Achievers program?**

_____Yes _____No

If you answered yes, name the program and year_____.

If you answered no, what year did you discontinue the program?_____.

If you answered no, did you ever return to the university to continue your education without involvement in the Academic Achievers Program or any other program? When?_____.

7**. Parents' level of education.**

	Father	Mother	Guardian
Attended college but did not complete degree	____	____	____
Completed an associate degree (A.A., A.S., etc.)	____	____	____
Completed a bachelor degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)	____	____	____
Completed a masters degree (M.A., M.Ed., etc.)	____	____	____
Completed a doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed.D.)	____	____	____
Completed a professional degree (M.D., J.D., etc.)	____	____	____
Graduated from high school	____	____	____
Completed a GED	____	____	____
Did not finish high school	____	____	____

8. **Marital Status during enrollment in the Academic Achievers Program:**

___ Single ___ Divorced ___ Married ___ Separated ___ Widowed

9. **Children during enrollment in the Academic Achievers Program:**

___Yes ___No If yes, how many? _____

10. **Employed during enrollment in the Academic Achievers Program:**

___Yes ___No   If yes, how many hours per week? _____

11**. Are you or were you caring for dependent/s during enrollment in the Academic Achievers Program:**

___Yes ___No   If yes, how many hours per week? _____

Part II – Open-ended Questions (Other Potential Factors for College Enrollment and Graduation)

Please answer the following questions that apply to you in as much depth as you feel comfortable. Follow-up questions will be developed based on your responses. The follow-up questions will be discussed in a small focus group of selected participants. Please use the back of the document for additional comments.

12. **As a CURRENT participant in the Academic Achievers Program, what factors of the program do you feel encouraged you to enroll in college?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. **As a CURRENT participant in the Academic Achievers Program, what factors are in place in the program that will assure your undergraduate college graduation?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. As a FORMER participant in the Academic Achievers Program, what factors of the program do you feel encouraged you to enroll in college?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. As a FORMER participant in the Academic Achievers Program, what factors were in place in the program that assured your undergraduate college graduation?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. As a FORMER participant in the Academic Achievers Program, what factors were NOT in place in the program that led you to drop out of your undergraduate program and NOT graduate from college?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

17. **As a FORMER participant in the Academic Achievers Program, what other factors** do you believe, if appropriately addressed will increase the participation in the AAP; college enrollment; and college graduation of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

18. **As a CURRENT participant in the Academic Achievers Program, what other factors** do you believe, if appropriately addressed will increase the participation in the AAP; college enrollment; and college graduation of low income, first generation high school Latino students in the Houston area?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part III - Concepts of Non-Cognitive Factors for College Enrollment and Graduation

Please respond to the questions to best describe how the concepts of non-cognitive factors and for college enrollment and graduation impacted your experiences as a **current or former participant** in the Academic Achievers Program.

NON-COGNITIVE FACTORS- engagement efforts that capture students from the moment of their first interactions with campus personnel.

19. **Did/Do you use academic advising/planning services?** If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

20. Were/are alternative times (e.g.: nights and weekends) for academic services such as advising, information about course work, career opportunities, and transfer policies available?
If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

21. Were/are academic accommodations for students with learning difficulties easily accessible? If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

22. Did/Do you use career counseling services? If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

23. **Did/Do you use job placement assistance services?** If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

24. **Were/are students connected with on campus jobs to meet financial needs?** If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

25. **Did/Do you use peer or other tutoring services?** If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

26. **Did/Do you use skill labs (writing, math, etc.) services?** If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

27. **Were/are there opportunities for students to connect with academic groups on campus?** If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

28. **I use/used child care services?** If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

29. **I use/used financial aid advising services.** If yes, was/is it beneficial why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

30. **I use/used computer lab services.** If yes, was/is it beneficial? why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

31. **I use/used student organization services often.** If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

32. **Emotional support services through culturally sensitive counseling and mentor programs are/were available?** If yes, was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

33. **Opportunities for social integration in a welcoming environment are/were easily accessible?** If yes, is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

34. Opportunities for students to connect with faculty outside of class time is/was easily accessible? If yes, is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

35. I enrolled in college classes fulltime. If yes, is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

36. Use this space to explain any of the responses in this section that you feel are very important.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

ACADEMIC CHALLENGE- high academic expectations for students.

37. **I am/was encouraged to put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussion.** If yes, is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

38. **I am/was encouraged to include diverse perspectives (different, races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussion or assignments.** If yes, is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

39. **I am/was encouraged to examine the strengths and weaknesses of my own views on a topic or issue on class assignments.** If yes, is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

40. I am/was encouraged to try to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from others' perspectives during class discussion. If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

41. I learned something that changed my viewpoint about an issue or concept during class discussion or class assignments. If yes, was/is it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

42. **I am/was encouraged to analyze the basic elements of an idea, theory, or experience.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

43. **I am/was encouraged to synthesize and organize ideas, information, or experiences in new ways.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

44. **I am/was encouraged to make judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

45. **I am/was encouraged to apply theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

46. **I am/was encouraged to use information I have read or heard to perform a new skill.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

47. **Use this space to explain any of the responses in this section that you feel are very important.**

_____

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_____

COLLEGE FACULTY- *participants' perceptions of cognitive and personal traits of college faculty.*

48. **Professors of my classes are/were knowledgeable.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

49. **Professors of my classes employ/employed instructional strategies which match my learning style.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

50. **Professors of my classes are/were sympathetic regarding students' academic and personal needs.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

51. **Professors of my classes exhibit/exhibited strong communication skills.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

52. **Professors of my classes are/were flexible.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

53. **Professors of my classes are/were organized.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

54. **Professors of my classes exhibit/exhibited positive attitudes.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

55. **Professors of my classes are/were fair.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

56. **Professors of my classes are/were respectful.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

57. **Professors of my classes mentor/mentored students.** If yes is/was it beneficial? Why?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

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58. **Use this space to explain any of the responses in this section that you feel are very important.**

_____

_____

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_____

_____

Thank you for participating in this study. Please return the survey to Lisa Rodriguez Patenotte. Please note that the return of this survey signifies informed consent on the part of the respondent.

VITA

LISA R. PATENOTTE

OBJECTIVE:
Bilingual school administrator seeks to continue my career with an organization that will utilize my management, supervision, and administrative skills to benefit mutual growth and success through strategic planning and responsible management of work and people.

EDUCATION:

2016	Educational Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Expected December, 2016-*Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX*
2004	Master of Science in Educational Management - *University of Houston-Clear Lake, Houston, TX*
1998	Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies - *University of Houston –Park, Houston, TX* Minor in Mexican American Studies

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CERTIFICATIONS:

2013	Administrative Certifications: • Texas Certification, Superintendent- *State Board of Texas* • Cognitive Coaching – *Clear Creek ISD, Webster, TX*
2004	Administrative Certifications: • Texas Certification, Principal - *State Board of Texas* • Professional Development and Appraisal System of Texas – *UH Clear Lake, Houston, TX / Region IV* • Instructional Leadership Development – *UH Clear Lake, Houston, TX / Region IV*
1999	Teacher Certifications: • Texas Teacher Certification in Elementary – *Bilingual / ESL – Spanish Grades 01 – 08* • Texas Teacher Certification in Elementary – *Spanish Grades 01 – 08* • Texas Teacher Certification in Elementary – *Self-Contained Grades 01 – 08*

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2006 – Present	**Assistant Principal** Cage Elementary / Project Chrysalis Middle Schools Houston Independent School District
2005 – 2006	**Instructional Coordinator** Cage Elementary / Project Chrysalis Middle Schools Houston Independent School District
1998 – 2005	**Third and Fourth Grade Bilingual Instructor** Cage Elementary / Project Chrysalis Middle Schools Houston Independent School District

SUPERVISORY EXPERIENCE:

2005 – present
- Title I Summer School Coordinator
- Standardized Test Coordinator
- District Test Coordinator
- Campus Test Coordinator
- Special Education Referral Chairperson
- Admission, Review, & Dismissal Committee Administrator
- Limited English Proficient / Language Proficiency Assessment Committee / Bilingual / ESL Administrator
- PEIMS Coordinator
- Campus At-Risk Coordinator
- Discipline Administrator
- Leavers/Withdrawals Administrator

2000–2004
- Gifted and Talented Committee Administrator
- Mentor of Second and Third Year Teachers
- Mentor of Beginning Teacher
- Grade Level Chairperson
- Gifted and Talented Curriculum Chairperson
- Discipline Committee Chairperson
- Faculty Advisory Committee Chairperson
- Safety Committee Chairperson
- Science Club Chairperson
- HAABSE Committee Chairperson Team Chair on Site-Based Decision Making Committee

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

2004 – Present
- Spearheaded volunteer tutoring program with University of Houston Center for Mexican American Studies Students
- Coordinated Cage/Chrysalis students Christmas caroling throughout the University of Houston campus
- Coordinated collaboration between Austin High School Magnet Program for Teaching Professions Student Interns and Coca Cola Valued Youth Programs

2004 – Present
- Developed a partnership between Cage/Chrysalis and schools in Mexico to provide school supplies and English resources to indigent students
- Implemented Campus Discipline Committee
- Implemented At-Risk Students' Mentorship Program

1998 – 2003
- Maintained a mentorship relationship with groups of girls throughout the school year as a *Best Friends* Mentor

SKILLS:

Microsoft Power Point	Microsoft Word	Macintosh Software	Microsoft Excel
Microsoft Outlook	Microsoft Publisher	SASI Program	Chancery
SAP Trained	PeopleSoft Trained		