

**Reconceptualizing Notions of Resilience Through the Experiences of Gay Latino Male
Collegians**

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
the School of Education in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2019

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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University of Pittsburgh, 2019

The purpose of this study was two-fold. First, the author explored the processes of resilience that gay Latino male collegians underwent throughout their educational trajectories. He examined the way that their most salient social identities and surrounding contexts intersected and influenced their resilience. In discussing students' social identities, the author situated them within larger systems of oppression (e.g. heterosexism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and racism). Second, this investigation challenged and expanded the theoretical underpinnings of a resilience framework. As theorized, resilience remained a race-neutral, gender-neutral, queer-neutral, and immigration neutral phenomenon, among other things. In this investigation, the author brought these to the forefront of a resilience framework.

The questions that guided this study included: 1) in what ways do gay Latino male collegians undergo a process of resilience?, 2) how do gay Latino males' social identities influence their resilience?, and 3) what are the vulnerabilities and protective factors pertinent to the lives of gay Latino men? These data were primarily derived from 80 in-depth interviews the author conducted with 50 gay Latino men from various colleges and universities in the United States. In addition, data were also drawn from two other sources, which included prompted group discussions among study participants via a private and closed social media page, and the collection of photographs taken by students on their respective campuses.

Findings revealed four major vulnerabilities including, (1) notions of hierarchy among gay groups, (2) femmephobia in the queer community, (3) being a gay Latino in the era of

Trump, and (4) racialized and homophobic incidents. Findings also revealed four major protective factors including, (1) the role of technology, (2) art, music, and writing, (3) education as an escape, and (4) influential people. In addition, the author also demonstrated the way that six social identities that were important to the participants (e.g. race/ethnicity, religion, social economic status, undocumented status, gender, and sexuality) connected to a process of resilience. Ultimately, he offered a reconceptualization of resilience, theoretical contributions, and other implications for research and practice based on this investigation.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my dear friend Masa and cousin Karla who are no longer with us today and whom we lost during my graduate school journey. I love you both. I also want to dedicate this study to all 50 students who participated in this study. Know that there are people who care about you and who are working to bring justice to your experiences in and beyond educational contexts. La lucha sigue!

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Preface

It is extremely important to me to note that this accomplishment would NOT have been possible without the support of numerous people and organizations. I am truly blessed to have an amazing network of people who believed in me and supported me throughout every step of this educational process. I am grateful for all of you.

First, I would like to thank my familia for all of their sacrifices throughout their lives to ensure that I reach this point of my academic career. Thank you mom and dad for all of your hard work, continuous advice and motivation, and love. Mom, you have consistently shown me love, care, and support in every possible way. You consistently remind me about the importance of being happy, and motivate me to continue moving forward in my life while reminding me to help others along the way. Dad, thank you for motivating me to do my best in school, giving me rides to and from school on a daily basis all throughout my K-12 education, and for always helping me financially. Thank you for always being willing to help me move to and from schools (we have another move coming soon). My siblings, April and Omar, thank you for always being on my corner, supporting me along the way, checking up on me, and always having my back. Omar, thank you for the laptop, it got me all through graduate school and it is still going strong. April, thanks for the regular funny texts and always making me laugh/laughing with me. I also want to thank Alice, my niece, for being amazing and giving me more to look forward to when coming home (I look forward to reading your dissertation in the near future). I am 100% certain that this doctorate would not of been possible without you— I love you all!

Second, I am extremely grateful and thankful to all 50 students who participated in this study. Thank you for being open, vulnerable, and willing to engage in this important work. This study was only possible because of your courage to engage in meaningful and, at times, difficult conversations. I learned a ton throughout this process and I owe it to you all. I will do my best to bring your stories and experiences to the forefront of higher education conversations.

Next, I would like to thank my amazing advisor and mentor, Dr. Garcia. Thank you for welcoming me into your research team in a time when I was still trying to figure out how to navigate graduate school, including learning about the importance of research and how to do it. Thank you for always being there for me when I needed advice, had (paragraph long) questions, and for supporting the work that I was interested in. Thank you for all of the opportunities and encouragement to get involved in the higher education world, writing letters of recommendation for me, and believing in me overall. I am a better scholar because of you! #teamgg

Dr. Harper, thank you for being an amazing mentor and advisor over the years. Thank you for believing in me and the work that I do, and for inviting me to work at the USC Race & Equity Center at the University of Southern California (this was an awesome move for me, both personally and academically). I still remember when we met over dinner in San Antonio and you extended the offer— it was an awesome day! Thank you for your support (and awesome ideas) throughout the dissertation process and especially when I was going through it (toughest time in my graduate program and you held it down. I'll always remember that). Gracias for everything in the job search process!

Dr. Gunzenhauser, thank you for agreeing to be a part of my dissertation committee and being supportive throughout the entire time. Your Philosophy of Education class was my first

graduate course and it was one of my favorites. Thank you for being invested and committed to my success in various ways.

Dr. Duck, thank you for agreeing to be a part of my dissertation committee and being supportive throughout the entire time. I very much enjoyed visiting your office and having conversations about my dissertation ideas as well as about class during my time at Pitt. Thank you for pushing me to think critically about my study. I loved taking your class.

Dr. Davis, thank you for being a mentor to me and for always keeping it real. Thanks for being open to answering questions and concerns that I had. I loved having the option to walk up to your office and engage in awesome conversations about a range of things, including the job search process. I especially remember going to you as I was in the process of making a decision about where to accept a position. Your advice was very helpful. I appreciate you.

Thank you to all of the people at Pitt SOE for always being welcoming, answering questions I had about enrolling for class, plan of studies, travel, etc.: Susan, thank you for always showing care and interest in my success, and for always helping me with travel arrangements; Maggie, thank you for always believing in me and welcoming me to Pitt (I still remember the tour we took when I first visited); Megan, thank you for always answering my questions and helping me in various ways; Shelly, thank you for helping me enroll for class every year and for always answering the questions I had; Harriet, thank you for helping me organize my paperwork and ensure that everything was up to date, including my Plan of Studies; Courtney, thank you for answering questions I had and for your help arranging my travel as I prepared to defend my dissertation and for graduation. You were all instrumental in my journey and your work does not go unnoticed.

Thank you to Pitt SOE faculty for supporting me along the way: Dr. DeAngelo, thank you for always being on my corner rooting for me and for all of your positive energy; Dr. Weidman, thank you for being supportive of my work and always having your door open; Dr. Kerr, thank you for always stopping by the Irvis Fellows office to check in; Dr. Trovato, thank you for always believing in me and constantly providing me with words of encouragement; Dr. Shafiq, thank you for keeping it real and for all of your great advice; Dr. Tanner Wallace, thank you for your constant support; Dr. McClure, thank you for your encouragement to keep pushing forward; Dr. Porter, thank you for being welcoming since my first year at Pitt and making me feel like I belong.

Thank you to Pitt Diversity Scholars (now Equity and Justice Scholars) for creating a space in which I felt like I belonged, for always being supportive, and validating the way I felt. Thank you for conference funding and professional development. Thank you to the USC Race & Equity Center team for the constant support and encouragement. Thank you for creating a safe and welcoming space as well as for conference funding. Cynthea, thanks for making time for me when it came to scheduling meetings with Shaun and getting paperwork done.

Thank you to Pitt RISE for giving me the opportunity to get involved as a mentor and coach for undergraduate students. I loved being a part of this program and helping my students along their educational journeys. Shout out to Uzi for always checking in and your words of encouragement (you're on to great things).

Another special shout out to all my people at Pitt (I know I may be missing some folks, please don't take it personal). Oscar, Osly, Nik, Jawanza, y'all held it down for/with me in my time at Pitt. I don't know what I would of done without y'all for real. From sharing office space to always laughing and having a good time (y'all know how much I love to laugh). Thank you

Jonathan for being with me throughout the graduate school search process and the first two years at Pitt. I don't even want to know what it would have been like the first year without you. Thank you Kevin for being there for me, especially the first few years at Pitt. Your constant encouragement was always important to me. Thank you Youssef and Aziz for always being down to hang out while at Pitt. Y'all made my time there so much better. Who would have thought that I would have developed some of my best friendships at Pitt? Cray but it happened.

This work would not have been possible without the financial support from multiple people and organizations. Thank you to the National Academy of Education for awarding me a NAEd/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship and the USC Race & Equity Center at the University of Southern California for believing in and funding this work. Thank you to the Office of the Provost at Pitt for awarding me a Provost Fellowship. Thank you to Pitt SOE for awarding me a K. Leroy Irvis Fellowship. All of your support is much appreciated!

Thank you to all the people who were there to provide words of encouragement as I worked on my dissertation. This process can be lonely but y'all made it so much better. Thank you Sy for all of our meet-ups on USC campus and coffee shops. I'm grateful that we got to meet and become friends. Susana, thanks for your support in the writing stages and always sharing cool, new music as we both moved along with the dissertation. Jorge, thanks for always showing support from the time we met at AAHHE (I look forward to collaborating with you in the near future). Nik, thanks for always sharing words of encouragement and being willing to help. Osly, thanks for always being there for me, answering all my questions, encouraging me to keep moving forward, all the laughs, and your mentorship and advice as I continued writing.

Thank you to my high school teachers that believed in me, especially Ms./Dr. Levine and Ms. Sica. Thank you to my undergraduate mentors and professors, including Dr. Burgos, Dr.

Saucedo, and Dr. Rodriguez. Thank you to the Latina/o Studies Department for all of the support. I also want to thank the Ronald E. McNair Scholars program for opening many doors, giving me the opportunity to do and present research, the mentorship throughout the graduate school process, and letting me know that I can do this work. Thank you Frank and Karen for being awesome friends since high school (and before that). Y'all made my time at Little Village and Curie so much better.

Thank you to my AMAZING and BEAUTIFUL girlfriend, Camara, for always being there for me throughout this journey. Thank you for being understanding, supportive, loving, and caring. Thank you for being willing to move to Los Angeles. Thank you for reading over my materials and always providing me with feedback. Your presence in this process made it so much better and meaningful. Trust me when I say that all of your work and support does not go unnoticed. You're the real MVP!!

1.0 Introduction

Latino men have garnered a noteworthy amount of attention in scholarly research as well as in the media in recent decades (e.g. Carrillo, 2013; G.A. Garcia, Huerta, Ramirez, Patrón, 2017; G.A. Garcia, Patrón, Ramirez, Hudson, 2016; Harper & Associates, 2014; Patrón & G.A. Garcia, 2016; Perez II, 2014; Perez & Taylor, 2015; Saenz, Bukoski, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2008; Saenz, Ponjuan, & Figueroa, 2016). Their experiences throughout the educational pipeline in addition to those outside of the education sector have drawn the attention of policymakers, educators, student affairs professionals, and law enforcement, among others. While some are deeply concerned by their dropout rate in schools and encounters with law enforcement, I am interested in their resilience. As a result, this investigation examines the processes of resilience that gay Latino men undergo in relation to their most salient social identities, particularly those connected to larger systems of oppression. At the same time, I sought to challenge and expand the theoretical underpinnings of a resilience framework.

The portrayal of Latino men has historically been used to dehumanize and pathologize them, which has exacerbated their struggle for advancement in nearly all aspects of society (e.g., education, economic, political). In a study examining some of the most common stereotypes associated with Latino men in films, Berg (1990) found that they are mostly perceived as bandidos (bandits), buffoons, and as Latin lovers, with the last one often tied to gay men. In other cases, they were showcased as poor peons who work in the fields (Berg, 1990). While such stereotypes are simply popular myths that are rooted in the oppression of this group of people, they have been adopted as truth (Rivera, 1994). Although Cromwell and Ruiz (1979) stated over

three decades ago that “The misapplication of a ‘pathology’ or ‘social deficit’ model has been most apparent in the work on Black and Hispanic family life” (p.356) due to the scarcity of research on these groups of people and popular social media representations, such stigmatized notions prevail today.

More recently, republican presidential candidate (at the time), Donald Trump, referred to Latinas/os¹, particularly Mexicans, as criminals, drug dealers, and rapists (NBC News, 2015; Forbes, 2015; Walker, 2015). During the final presidential debate, President Trump, when responding to the moderator’s questions on immigration policy, responded by saying,

We’ll get them out, secure the border, and once the border is secured, at a later date we’ll make a determination as to the rest. But we have some **bad hombres** [bad men] here and we’re going to get them out (Moreno, 2016).

Not only was Trump mocking Spanish speakers by attempting to speak Spanish to criticize “bad men” in this country but he associated the term undocumented immigrants with Latinas/os, particularly referring to bad Latino men. These comments have been used to stereotype, criminalize, marginalize, and ultimately oppress Latino men. Furthermore, such perception is reinforced in social science research, as Latino men have been reduced to “statistics, variables, and the use of questionnaires” (Abalos, 2002, p. 48).

Although the aforementioned stereotypes are inclusive of all Latino men, regardless of their sexuality, queer² Latino men are further stigmatized due to their sexual orientation. For example, President Trump failed to acknowledge June as queer pride month, causing backlash

¹ Latina/o is used when referring to Latinas/os as a racial/ethnic group. Latino/Latino male is used when referring to men while Latina is used when referring to women.

² Queer is used as an umbrella term to refer to the LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*) community.

from queer rights' advocates, especially since Trump recognized June as homeownership and African American music appreciation month (Keshner, 2017). To exacerbate the issue, the federal government decided that the 2020 census would not include questions related to sexual orientation and gender identity (Lang, 2017). All of this comes after President Trumps' administration removed all queer references from the official government website (Dziemianowicz, 2017). Although there is no explicit response from President Trump, recent actions demonstrate his intent to refrain from recognizing the queer community.

These actions further stigmatize queer Latino men, who are often viewed as possessing feminine characteristics solely based on their sexuality (Sanchez et al., 2016). Whether a Latino male self-identifies as queer or not, exhibiting stereotypical feminine characteristics often leads such men to be perceived as gay (Sanchez et al., 2016). Since identifying as gay is antithetical to being macho in the Latina/o community, negative stereotypes are exacerbated. Even among queer men, there are many who have negative feelings towards those who display feminine characteristics (Sanchez et al., 2016). According to Sanchez et al. (2016), some scholars have suggested that one explanation for this can be rooted in gay men wanting to prove that the only difference they had with heterosexual men was their sexuality and not the manner in which they behave or exert that sexuality. Furthermore, gay men are perceived as promiscuous and deviant (Anderson, 1998; Goodman, 2001). Collectively, these stereotypes and social expectations have created a distorted understanding about gay Latinos and Latino men in general. Such understanding is limiting, does not account for their educational successes or their resilience, and fails to discuss the systems of oppression that they navigate on a regular basis.

Overall, the negative portrayal of gay Latino men and Latino men in general has positioned them as struggling economically, politically, and educationally. It is important to note,

however, that while Latino male college enrollments have increased in recent decades (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010), negative perceptions, as described above, have dominated the discourse and the construction of negative stereotypes that instead could have been framed in a different and more constructive manner. Thus, there is a one-sided interpretation about Latino men that overlooks their resilience.

In this study, I focus on understanding the processes of resilience that gay Latino men in college undergo as it relates to their most salient social identities, especially those connected to large systems of oppression (e.g. racism, homophobia, patriarchy, white supremacy, etc.). This shift in focus inadvertently complicates notions of resilience and gay Latino men, particularly through vulnerabilities and protective factors. Data for this study were primarily derived from 80 in-depth interviews I conducted with gay Latino men from various colleges and universities in the United States, asking them to share their life narratives starting with elementary school and bringing it up to the present. I also inquired about their social identities and the ways in which they intertwined to influence their educational experiences and resilience. In addition, data were also drawn from two other sources, which included prompted group discussions among study participants via a private social media page, and; the collection of photographs taken by students on their campuses, particularly of places that help foster their resilience.

In this chapter, I begin by outlining the purpose of this study along with the questions guiding this research, followed by a brief discussion of the problem statement. I then introduce the study's methods. Next, I discuss the study's contributions to research and practice. I conclude this chapter by discussing the significance of this project as well as an overview of the remaining chapters.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is two-fold. Firstly, I explore the processes of resilience that gay Latino male collegians undergo throughout their educational trajectories. I am interested in understanding the way that their social identities influence their resilience. As such, I particularly investigate the ways in which race, sexuality, gender, social economic status, undocumented status, and religion relate to vulnerabilities and protective factors they experience inside and outside of education. In doing so, I account for the role and manifestation of systems of oppression (Weber, 1998), as they are the underlying component that influences their vulnerabilities, for example.

Although there is a lack of consensus on whether resilience is best defined as an outcome, process, a trait, or a state (Castro & Murray, 2010; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010), I understand it as a dynamic and multilayered process. In understanding resilience as a process, I account for day-to-day factors that continually influence their lives and therefore the process of resilience that gay Latinos undergo as they navigate different challenges within different spaces. By accounting for their experiences over a life time, I am able to make connections between different life events instead of viewing each of them on an individual basis, reinforcing this notion of resilience as an ongoing process that is not determined by one sole event or a single vulnerability. In referring to resilience as a process, I contend that it is developed over an indefinite period of time as a consequence of numerous internal and external factors to the individual, including, but not limited to, the surrounding environment, the salience of an individual's social identities, access to resources, influential people, and that is overall situated within systems of oppression.

Secondly, this investigation challenges and expands the theoretical underpinnings of a resilience framework, as it relates to gay Latino males. I reveal different types of adversity than those discussed in resilience literature and that gay Latinos encounter in the home, school, and queer community settings. I pay particular attention to those that are connected to large systems of oppression (Goodman, 2001; Weber, 1998), which have been largely overlooked in resilience literature. After identifying such forms of adversity, I discuss the importance of protective factors.

Through this investigation, I demonstrate why research with Latino males needed to be further scrutinized by drawing beyond numbers and by focusing on gay Latino men, whom experiences have been largely excluded from recent deliberation on Latino males. I sought to provide a more nuanced understanding about what it means to be a Latino male, one that extends beyond variables and that instead accounts for their racialized, sexualized, and gendered experiences, among other things.

1.1.1 Research Questions

The three questions guiding this research are the following:

1. In what ways do gay Latino male collegians undergo a process of resilience? ^[1]_[SEP]
2. How do gay Latino males' social identities (race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, social economic status, and undocumented status) influence their resilience?
3. What are the vulnerabilities and protective factors that are pertinent to the lives of gay Latino males?

1.2 Problem Statement

Queer identified Latina/o students are known to encounter a range of negative experiences due to systems of oppression that have historically marginalized them inside and outside of education, including, racism, heterosexism, and homophobia (e.g. Abalos, 2002; Colon, 2001; D’Augelli, 1989; 1992; Diaz, Ayala, Bein, Henne, & Marin, 2001; Sánchez, 2014). I utilize queer as an “umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications” (Jagose, 1996, p. 1) and to “denote a deviation from and even a rejection of the normative sexuality, “proper” genders (i.e., a particular type of masculinity for men, femininity for women), and natural(ized) sexes (i.e., male and female)” (Kumashiro, 1999, p. 492).

According to Sánchez (2014), hostile environments throughout college campuses are a result of normative heterosexist practices. In a study on six queer Latino males in college, L.F. Garcia (2015) found that there was few spaces outside of the classroom that made them feel comfortable, leading Latino males to isolation. Furthermore, students felt like their racialized experiences were not considered in programming, as most of the students on campus were white³ and therefore excluded Latina/o student perspectives (L.F. Garcia, 2015). Heterosexist acts coupled with a lack of consideration of Latino males’ racialized experiences (Sánchez, 2014) make it difficult for queer Latino males to get involved on campus and prevent them from performing to the best of their academic abilities. Since queer students’ in-school and out-of-school experiences are intertwined, it is important to account for both, as I do here. The manifestation and influence of systems of oppression is not confined to academic or non-academic spaces, making it appropriate to account for both.

³ white is in lowercase to decenter white peoples’ experiences.

In order to better understand such experiences, however, it was imperative to recognize the role of policies and other forms of legislation that have discriminated against queer Latinas/os and that have significantly influenced their lives inside and outside of school today. If left unaddressed, queer Latinas/os and the queer community at large will continue to be oppressed in all life facets including, negative educational experiences and dismal graduation rates, policies that explicitly discriminate against them, persistent stigmatization in the literature and other forms of mainstream media, and become more susceptible to health issues. It is precisely through the simultaneous functioning of different types of adversity that derive from discriminatory practices that lead gay Latinos to experience various forms of vulnerabilities. At the same time, however, it is these particular types of oppression that led gay Latino males to experience a different type of resilience than what has traditionally been discussed in resilience literature.

1.2.1 Adversarial Experiences Connected to Systems of Oppression: Racism and Heterosexism

Historically, the queer community has consistently undergone a series of attacks that have influenced their lives— from legislation violating their human rights to discrimination that they encounter on a daily basis, both inside and outside of school. These forms of discrimination are underlyingly but directly linked to larger systems of oppression, including racism and heterosexism, which are enacted through individual, institutional, and cultural practices (Goodman, 2001). These systems of oppression are characterized by dominant-subordinate relations in which queer people are the subjugated group (Goodman, 2001). My focus on resilience precisely accounts for these systems of oppression.

Oppression of the queer community can be traced to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. At the time, Native Americans were known to engage in same sex relationships (Stein, 2005). In fact, men who engaged in what we know as traditional female roles and females who engaged in traditional male roles were treated with respect. In acts of disapproval, British, French, and Spanish colonists attacked Native Americans' sexual practices. Additionally, Native people were stripped of their land and had diseases spread throughout their communities. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, queer people were prosecuted and executed for sodomy while others were charged with lesser offenses (Stein, 2005). Although some states abolished the death penalty for sodomy, it was only for free people, leaving people of color without any sort of protection. In 1866, Frances Thompson, a free black woman, testified against white men who raped her but had her case dismissed since it was discovered that she was biologically born a man (Stein, 2005). Still, others were arrested for wearing clothes that did not correspond to their biological sex, which is behavior that is still reprimanded today.

Despite some progression, the queer community has continued to endure oppressive acts in recent decades. In the mid 20th century, harassment of the queer community was rampant, especially as they became more visible. Queer people were continually harassed by police in bars and had their organizational meeting locations raided. Frequent harassment led to multiple days and nights of rioting throughout the country, as queer people fought for their rights (Stein, 2005). The enactment of recent anti queer legislation along with proposed policies continue to oppress the queer community across the U.S. In an article discussing anti queer bills that are pending in different states, Bendery and Signorile (2016) discussed how a law in Mississippi allowed people to deny services to same-sex couples for religious reasons. Other states like North Carolina have had their governor sign laws that ban cities from passing queer anti-discrimination ordinances. In

Tennessee, there was a bill that allowed mental health professionals to refuse providing their services to queer individuals (Bendery & Signorile, 2016).

In 2016, there were over 100 active bills that reflected many of the same sentiments discussed in the aforementioned laws and policies across 22 states. While the bills had a common goal, to discriminate against the queer community, they fell within three major categories, including bathroom bills, allowing judges to refuse same sex marriage, and allowing businesses to deny their services to queer people. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which was proposed and passed almost unanimously in 1993 allowed states to ensure that interests in religious freedom were protected, allowing states to discriminate against the queer community and other marginalized groups (Bendery & Signorile, 2016). Colorado, Hawaii, Iowa, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Oklahoma are among the states that have active RFRA bills. Moreover, there are bills that “require public universities to provide funds for student organizations, regardless of whether the organization discriminates against LGBT people based on religious beliefs” (Bendery & Signorile, 2016).

In 2016, the U.S. experienced the deadliest mass shooting when 49 people were killed and more than 50 were injured at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. The incident was declared as a hate crime against the queer community, the biggest against them in U.S. history (Fantz, Karimi, & McLaughlin, 2016). More specifically, a majority of the victims were people of color, particularly Latinas/os. A report from the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs found that 80% of all homicide victims in 2014 were people of color, with a majority of them being Black and Latina/o (Ahmed, & Jindasurat, 2014). It was reported that gay men survivors of hate violence homicides were 2.3 times more likely to experience any physical violence while transgender men were 3.5 times more likely to experience hate violence (Ahmed, & Jindasurat,

2014). Moreover, Latina/o “survivors were more likely to experience discrimination and police violence and were more likely to be injured, experience physical violence, and experience hate violence at the workplace” (Ahmed, & Jindasurat, 2014, p. 38). Latinas/os are believed to have such experiences as a result of xenophobia and anti-immigrant bias that is widespread in the U.S.

According to a New York Times article, queer people are more likely to be victims of hate crimes than any other underrepresented group (Park, & Mykhyalshyn, 2016). While not a competition, queer people are twice as likely to be targeted than African Americans, one of the most marginalized groups in the nation. Park and Mykhyalshyn, (2016) note how about 20% of the 5,462 hate crimes reported to the FBI in 2014 were because of peoples’ sexual orientation or their perceived orientation. It is theorized that part of the reason for the attacks on the queer community is because people have generally been more accepting of the LGBTQ+ community in recent times. As a form of retaliation, those who oppress the queer community may become more radical, as stated by Mark Potok, a senior fellow at the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Additionally, Gregory M. Herek, a psychology professor at the University of California, Davis, said that anti-queer people may feel that their perceivment of the world is threatened by queer presence, leading them to enact a form of harassment or violence (Park, & Mykhyalshyn, 2016). Discrimination, physical violence, verbal harassment in person, threat/intimidation, sexual harassment, bullying, sexual violence, police violence, and robbery are some of the most common types of hate violence against the queer community (Ahmed & Jindasurat, 2014). Such forms of violence are prevalent throughout the educational pipeline (Coronado, 2009; D’Augelli, 1989, 1992; Evans & Broido, 1999; Wickens & Sandlin, 2010).

It is through the aforementioned systems of oppression that Latino men undergo a particular process of resilience, one that is inextricably linked to large systems of oppression, to

their social identities, and that looks significantly different than that of white people. Failing to account for their social identities when investigating the experiences of resilient gay Latinos does not only discount their particular experiences and provides a distorted analysis about who they are but also confines the understanding and theoretical underpinnings of a resilience framework to resilient white peoples' experiences.

1.3 Overview of Conceptual Framework

Starting in the 1970's, resilience emerged as a topic of exploration among researchers, particularly within the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and psychopathology. Since then, resilience has gained extensive attention across a range of disciplines—from education to psychics and material sciences (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). Consequently, there are multiple resilience interpretations. While some researchers understand resilience as an innate characteristic there are others who understand it as a process that is influenced by numerous external forces. Due to inconsistencies, Shaikh and Kauppi (2010) have analyzed different resilience phenomena and have situated them within two main disciplines. Psychology and social work/resilience are the two overarching clusters, with each of them having several themes within them (Shaikh and Kauppi, 2010). The psychological perspective includes; personality traits, positive outcomes/forms of adaptation despite high-risk, factors associated with positive adaptation, processes, sustained competent functioning resistance, and recovery from trauma or adversity. The second strand of resilience includes, human agency/resistance, and survival.

In this study, I understand resilience as a dynamic, multilayered process occurring over an indefinite period of time in which individuals undergo adversity related to their social

identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender, social economic status, undocumented status, and religion), which are inextricably linked to systems of oppression, and manage to successfully overcome and/or cope with the adversity. At the same time, I reject the notion of resilience that solely understands it as a personality trait, as I see it as something that is developed over an indefinite period of time. Moreover, I diverge from using resilience to refer to a personal characteristic since it would hold the individual solely responsible for not being able to overcome some form of adversity, for example. By understanding resilience as a personality trait, researchers may fail to account for structural forces that are in place to oppress and marginalize particular groups of people, making it harder for them to be successful in the face of adversity. Like Rutter (1987), I contend that resilience cannot and should not be viewed as a fixed attribute. While someone may be successful under a particular context with a specific kind of adversity, they may not be successful in others, further exemplifying the importance of contexts and that of processes.

According to Masten (2014), resilience has been “applied to systems of many kinds at many interacting levels, both living and nonliving, such as a microorganism, a child, a family, a security system, an economy, a forest, or the global climate” (p. 6). Despite such applications, resilience has mainly been studied in relation to people. In this study, I use resilience to better understand the experiences of gay Latino men in higher education. Additionally, resilience is often understood in relation to risk and protective factors. Risk factors are those “associated with elevated probabilities for various disorders and problems” (Masten, 2014, p. 7). They include maltreatment, violence, disasters, and traumatic life events. Since “risk factors are considered direct correlates of poor or negative outcomes,” (Shaikh and Kauppi, p. 160) people who showed signs of success despite risk factors were identified as resilient.

In showing signs of resilience, however, it is important to account for protective factors, which in many ways counter the negative effects that are experienced as a result of risks. Protective factors are broadly understood as those that ameliorate risks (Luthar et al., 2000). Initially, Garmezy (1985) identified three categories that functioned as protective factors including, personality features, family cohesion, and availability of support systems that help counter balance the risks (as cited in Rutter, 1987). Rutter (1987) contends that protective factors are only evident in combination to risk variables because without it there is no basis to studying protective factors. While resilience, as a framework, has undergone changes in its applicability and interpretations, there are still some shortcomings in understanding the gay Latino male experience. As a result, this study accounted for factors that were pertinent to this group of people, particularly as it related to the intertwinement of social identities that are salient to them.

1.4 Overview of Methodology

Since I was particularly interested in the life stories of gay Latino men in college and in theorizing about resilience in ways that move beyond conventional understandings of adversity based on the experiences of white people, I employed narrative as the guiding methodology for this investigation. Atkinson (1995) outlines three forms of personal stories including 1) life story 2) autobiography and 3) personal myth. Here, I engaged in life stories. Life stories are those “a person chooses to tell about the life they have lived, what they remember of it, and what they want others to know of it” (Atkinson, 1995, p. xiv). Because I explored the ways that race/ethnic background and other socially constructed identities influenced the lived experiences of resilient

Latino males, narrative allowed me to further understand the specific stories that were significant to such students.

Narrative is also understood as “a rich framework through which they [researchers] can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 1). This form of inquiry is used to address the complexities of human experience “through the construction and reconstruction of personal stories; it is well suited to addressing issues of complexity and cultural and human centredness because of its capacity to record” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 1). In this study, I sought to understand the ways that race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, among other social identities, intersected from the participants’ perspectives and how that subsequently influenced their in school and out of school experiences, leading to a process of resilience. I was interested in learning about the ways that gay Latino men made sense of their experiences in relation to social identities that were salient to them and that are connected to large systems of oppression, leading to particular types of adversity. In working with gay Latino men and providing them with the platform to share their life narratives, they constructed their stories as they deemed appropriate. According to Atkinson (1995), “telling our own stories enables us to speak the truth and to be heard, recognized, and acknowledged by others. It is only through story that our truth can be told, that the meaning of life can be identified” (p. xiii).

1.4.1 Data Collection and Student Sample

Because I was specifically interested in examining the experiences of resilient gay Latino males, I used purposeful sampling techniques and only interviewed those who self-identified as such (Patton, 1990). To participate, students had to be at least 18 years of age, self-identified as a

gay Latino, and enrolled as an undergraduate or graduate student in a college or university. Having entered the investigation with the understanding that gay Latinos undergo a series of vulnerabilities and challenges related to their social identities and within systems of oppression, allowed me to label them as resilient, aligning with Patrón and G.A. Garcia's (2016) interpretation.

Data derived from eighty semi-structured interviews that I conducted with with fifty gay Latino students enrolled in different colleges and universities throughout the United States, with a majority coming from Southern California. In recruiting participants, I engaged in two main strategies as a form of data collection. Firstly, I co-created and co-hosted a *Gay Latino Male Summit* where attendees engaged in a series of meaningful, large and small group activities related to gay Latinos in higher education. At the end of the event, students who were interested in participating in this study signed up before leaving. Secondly, I created an online call for participants in which interested students were allowed to voluntarily sign up for the study (see Appendix C). The call outlined the purpose of the study and asked students to fill out basic demographic information. Moreover, additional data included a private and closed social media page and the collection of photographs that students took on their respective campuses.

1.4.2 Data Analysis

Narrative analysis moves from the data that has been collected into the structuring of stories that connect the narratives with other contextual elements that were significant in the participants' lives (e.g. Bruner, 1991; Kramp, 2007). According to Reissman (2008), narrative analysis is a set of methods that are used to interpret data that has been collected. In discussing multiple forms of analysis within narrative, Reissman (2008) outlined a typology consisting of

four main analytic approaches: thematic, structural, dialogic-performative, and visual narrative analysis.

For this study, I engaged in a thematic approach. Thematic analysis refers to “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.6). Related to a resilience framework, the themes were organized into vulnerabilities and protective factors as overarching categories. Unlike other forms of analysis that are tied to particular theoretical frameworks, thematic analysis can be used in relationship to different theories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was particularly useful in making sense of the interviews and data from the social media page, especially participants’ responses to specific questions. In presenting the findings, I did not include data from the collection of photographs.

In building up to the themes, I engaged in a systematic approach of data analysis. First, all transcripts were professionally transcribed. Upon receiving them, I read every single transcript without taking any notes, allowing me to fully immerse myself in each of the stories. I then re-read the transcripts and began developing a list of open codes and ideas (Merriam, 2009), especially those that were consistent across participants. Since I was interested in discussing non-traditional vulnerabilities and protective factors related to participants’ social identities, I was open to codes and ideas that emerged from the questions in the interview protocol. However, precisely because I knew that I wanted to reveal a different set of vulnerabilities, I also focused on codes that were particularly related to the six social identities discussed here. As such, I engaged in both inductive and deductive coding (Merriam, 2009). Since I wrote analytic memos (Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2013) for each of the interviews, I also revisited those during the

coding phases. These memos were related to resilience, social identities, and participants' behavior, including things to follow-up on.

Once I developed a solid list of codes, I defined each of them in order to have a level of consistency by the time I engaged in line-by-line coding. I then arranged the codes into categories (Saldaña, 2013), allowing me to place the already existing codes within larger categorical concepts. Codes were grouped together based on similarities to one another but always in relation to the larger concept. Upon finalizing the codebook (Saldaña, 2013), I coded each of the transcripts using NVivo, which is a qualitative data analysis software. On NVivo, I engaged in line by line coding by applying a code to specific sections of the transcript. Once I coded the transcripts, I was able to separate data through different filtering on the software. This then allowed me to develop a list of vulnerabilities and protective factors as themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) based on analysis of the codes.

1.5 Delimitations of Study

Because I was interested in the processes of resilience that gay Latino men undergo, heterosexual men as well as women were excluded from this investigation, limiting the applicability and understanding of resilience as a framework as well as the relationship between resilience and the social identities discussed here for such groups of people. For instance, due to differences in gender dynamics (e.g. gender roles) within Latina/o families, gender, as an identity, may manifest itself differently for women than it did for men here. Also, while research on queer men has focused on understanding the developmental stages and the processes of coming out, this study was not interested in learning about the different stages within particular

developmental models. Although students spoke about their coming out processes, such stories were not situated within existing models.

Furthermore, due to the scope and focus on gay Latino men, this investigation was limiting in terms of understanding the processes of resilience and experiences for other groups within the queer community (e.g. lesbian, bisexual). I understand that due to differences in sexuality, for example, people may potentially have dissimilar experiences inside and outside of school but this study did not seek to engage in a comparative analysis or reveal those differences. Additionally, even though there is tremendous heterogeneity among Latinas/os, from histories to cultural practices, this study did not scrutinize the differences between distinct ethnic groups. I was not looking to reveal the way that cultural or familial expectations related to the participants' racial/ethnic groups influenced the coming out process or even their resilience. Similarly, this investigation did not attempt to account for differentiations across racial groups (e.g. Black, Asian, Native American, white). Geographically, a majority of the students in this study were from the Southern California area, limiting the possibilities to making comparisons based on region in the United States. In the same thread, there was an imbalance in institutional type. For example, although there were a significant number of students that transferred from community college to four-year institutions, there were only five that were enrolled in two-year colleges at the times of the interviews.

In terms of resilience, this study did not account for or use the term resilience to refer to a personality trait at any point in the document, as previous research has done. By understanding resilience as a fixed and innate trait, researchers can fail to account for structures that were created to keep marginalized groups of people oppressed. At the same time, understanding resilience as a personality trait means holding the individual accountable when they are not

successful in overcoming some form of adversity, which I intentionally diverged from doing in this study. Moreover, this investigation was not interested in determining the level of resilience that the participants possessed, as that would also emphasize personal traits. Comparably, this research did not consider the role of grit in the experiences of gay Latinos. Like resiliency, which is used to denote a personality trait (Luthar et al., 2000), grit is best understood as a personal characteristic that is based on an individual's specific and long-term goals (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007).

1.6 Contributions to Research

Historically, the understanding of resilience and therefore the developed criterion to label students as such have been confined within certain limits, excluding adversity that is prominent among gay Latinos. If resilience is concerned with adversity, why has race and racism, including microaggressions; homophobia; and heterosexism, been overlooked in discussing vulnerabilities? Since systems of oppression are deep rooted in the subjugation of queer communities, it is imperative that they are accounted for in resilience frameworks, as I do here. To some extent, the practice of labeling students as resilient has relied on the utilization of scales and questionnaires, which were not created with the experiences of gay Latinos in mind. By excluding their experiences in the process, researchers have discounted the value of those experiences, which are significantly different than those of heterosexual white people.

This shortcoming pushed me to propose a different way of theorizing about resilience—from its conceptual meaning to what resilience can look like for gay Latinos and other minoritized groups of students. For example, by taking queerness and racism into account, there

was an automatic shift in the conversation, one that moved beyond conventional notions of resilience. This is not to say that researchers should not think of resilience in relation to chronic poverty or natural disasters, as previously done, for example. On the contrary, I simply urge that we expand on that conversation. In doing so, we, as researchers, are not only more considerate of the experiences of gay Latino males and people of color more broadly but there will also be changes in the way resilience has been approached, as demonstrated here.

Thus, this study sought to make three contributions to research, (1) situating adversity related to gay Latino men's most salient social identities, especially those connected to systems of oppression (e.g. sexuality, race/ethnicity, undocumented status, class, etc.), at the center of a resilience framework, (2) understanding resilience as a process that is developed over an indefinite period of time and that is influenced by people's social identities and surrounding contexts, and (3) further understand the in school and out of school experiences that support and/or hinder a process of resilience for gay Latino men in college.

By situating adversity within systems of oppression, as described previously, and by understanding resilience as a process at the same time, the individual is further removed from having full responsibility when adversity is not successfully dealt with. As such, it is important to account for systems that may help explain why people undergo some of the aforementioned vulnerabilities. When resilience is understood as a personality trait, the individual is held responsible when difficult situations are not overcome. Additionally, it is important to note that resilience does not mean that an individual will be resilient under *every* form of adversity that they are faced with. Instead, someone can be resilient under certain circumstances and not under others, further exemplifying the notion of resilience as a process.

As a conceptual framework, resilience has undergone changes in its applicability and in terms of definition since its inception. According to Luthar et al. (2000), literature on schizophrenic patients laid the foundation for the development of research on resilience in the 1970's. With the progression of time, however, socioeconomic status, parental mental illness, and catastrophic life events were taken into account in resilience interpretations (Luthar et al., 2000), expanding the applicability and number of people labeled as resilient. Furthermore, multiple understandings of resilience simultaneously began to emerge in the 1980's and 1990's (Luthar et al., 2000). Even the term invulnerable, which was used to refer to resilient individuals prior to the word resilience, was replaced due to it being misleading (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008; Luthar et al., 2000).

Despite four different waves of research and changes made within the construct of resilience (Masten & Obradovic, 2006), there has not been an alteration that is inclusive of the identities discussed here as students navigate educational spaces, warranting an addition or modification within the framework, which I explored in this study. As theorized, resilience remains a race neutral, gender neutral, queer neutral, and immigration neutral phenomenon. This investigation addressed those gaps. Since resilience is concerned with positive adaptation during adversity, it was imperative to acknowledge the difficulty gay Latino males encountered as a result of race and racism and homophobia in and beyond educational spaces.

1.7 Contributions to Practice

In practice, it is important for higher education institutions as well as for federal and state legislation to consider a number of things related to the queer community, as research has shown

that college campuses and many other public services tend to be hostile environments for queer students (D'Augelli, 1989; 1992; Evans & Broido, 1999; Rankin, 2003; Rhoads, 1997; Wickens & Sandlin, 2010). As a result, it is imperative that postsecondary institutions are intentional about creating campus climates that are not only welcoming to queer students but that protect them from being abused and make them feel safe. There is no reason for why a student, regardless of their sexuality or race/ethnicity, should feel unsafe on college campuses. In understanding these experiences, it is the responsibility of institutional stakeholders and policymakers to be more considerate of gay Latino males' educational undertakings so that they can be better served throughout the educational pipeline and can graduate at greater rates.

This study makes a contribution by identifying vulnerabilities participants considered to be the most prominent in creating negative experiences for them. It is important to note that the vulnerabilities presented here are not exclusive to higher education spaces, as students' identities are carried from one context to another (e.g. home, school, work, etc.). By becoming aware of the vulnerabilities affecting gay Latino men, higher education institutions can then strategically develop initiatives and institutional policies that ameliorate the effects derived from the identified challenges.

In the same thread, postsecondary institutions need to consider the implementation of a queer student resource center as a protective factor that contributes to students' resilience. According to Beemyn (2000), there were only five professionally staffed LGBT centers on college campuses prior to 1990. If queer students are known to have negative experiences on college campuses and there are few to no physical spaces that can assist them in countering the effects that derive from those experiences, it becomes harder for them to find safety and do well academically. The presence of physical spaces and people who are invested and committed to the

success of queer students can be an imperative protective factor for gay Latinos. Within that, however, it is equally important that such spaces cater to the specific needs of Latina/o students and other people of color. Perhaps, hiring people that reflect the racial/ethnic and lived experiences of students of color may be helpful.

Educating the student body on issues related to sexuality and having zero tolerance for those who do not follow set regulations is essential for supporting students. It is important for educational institutions to “radically transform the anti-queer institutional cultures...by engaging students, teachers, and other stakeholders in respectful and critical deliberations over homophobia and its effects” (Brockenbrough, 2012, p. 758). Not only can institutional agents across colleges and universities serve in the familial role that is absent for some Latino students, as viewed in the following chapter, but they can also create safe spaces that allow queer students to develop their sexualities. For some queer students, especially those that have little to no autonomy to express and explore their sexuality at home, it is precisely their college campus that facilitates their coming out process. As such, this study contributes by making institutional stakeholders aware of the culture throughout the educational pipeline, particularly for gay Latinos. These cultures, in many ways, dictate the types of experiences gay Latinos have, subsequently influencing their resilience. Since colleges and universities are considered important spaces where students develop many of their identities as well as exercise a level of autonomy, it is important that they are conducive to positive outcomes.

At the state and federal levels, it is imperative for politicians to first stop the proposing and enactment of policies that hinder the experiences of the queer community. There has recently been a plethora of bills and policies meant to oppress them—from bathroom bills to policies that prohibit same sex marriage (Bendery & Signorile, 2016). In 2016, there were over 100 active

bills across 22 states that were meant to perpetuate the subjugation that the queer community has historically endured. Bendery and Signorile (2016) discussed how a law in Mississippi allowed people to deny services to same-sex couples for religious reasons while there were bills that allowed public universities to fund student organizations, regardless of whether the organization discriminated against LGBT people (Bendery & Signorile, 2016).

Secondly, state and federal governments need to implement laws and policies that allow and promote same sex marriage and that reprimand those who actively engage in hostile behavior towards queer individuals. This investigation contributes by demonstrating that resilience is a process that is heavily influenced by structural entities, including legislation. If there are policies and bills in place that deter gay Latinos from exercising their basic human rights, they are more likely to experience vulnerabilities, inadvertently affecting their resilience. Discriminatory legislation affects gay Latinos in all life facets, especially since they are known to fall within the vulnerability factor category in a resilience framework, especially as discussed here.

1.8 Significance

In 2012, Latinas/os were the second largest racial/ethnic group in the United States, accounting for 17% of the total U.S. population (Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015). By 2060, they are projected to represent a total of 31%, only putting them 12% behind that of whites. Consequently, the number of Latinas/os in higher education has reached a record high in recent years, making them the largest group of students of color in higher education (Krogstad, 2015; Lytle, 2012; NCES; 2017; Santiago et al., 2015). Congruent with the number of Latinas/os in the

U.S. in 2012, Latina/o students made up 16% of students enrolled at the undergraduate level in that same year and 15% of graduates with a bachelor's degree or higher (NCES, 2013; Krogstad, 2015). More recent NCES data demonstrates a 9% increase in Latina/o student bachelor attainment from 2000-2016 (from 10% to 19%) (NCES, 2017). In the same time frame, Latina/o student college enrollment increased 126%—from 1.4 million to 3 million students, which was higher than that of any other racial/ethnic group (NCES, 2017). For Latinos in particular, there was a 15% increase in their enrollment from 2000-2016 (from 18% to 33%) (NCES, 2017).

With the burgeoning in the number of Latinas/os in the United States and in postsecondary institutions, the need for support structures that facilitate positive experiences for such group of people remains an imperative concern for institutional stakeholders. This is especially true since Latina/o students are known to experience various forms of microaggressions and racism, isolation, and feeling unwelcomed on college campuses (G.A. Garcia & Johnston-Guerrero, 2016; Gloria, Castellanos, Delgado-Guerrero, Salazar, Nieves, Mejia, and Martinez, 2016; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Moreover, collegial experiences for queer Latinas/os are exacerbated due to systems of oppression that are pervasive across college campuses, making them prone to negative experiences because of their sexual orientation, for example. Multiple research studies have shown that queer students are likely to experience various forms of violence— from verbal abuse to physical violence (D'Augelli, 1989; 1992; Rankin, 2003; Rhoads, 1997; Sánchez, 2014; Wickens & Sandlin, 2010). As such, support structures for queer identified students can play an immense role in shaping their educational and life experiences and contributing to their resilience.

1.9 Conclusion and Dissertation Overview

This introductory chapter serves as an overview of the entire dissertation study. I began by outlining the purpose and the research questions guiding the overall investigation. As previously stated, the purpose was two fold; (1) to explore the process of resilience that gay self-identified Latino male collegians underwent throughout their educational trajectories, particularly in relation to their social identities that are connected to systems of oppression, and (2) to challenge and expand the theoretical underpinnings of a resilience framework, as it relates to gay Latinos. I sought to reveal different types of adversity than those discussed in resilience literature and that are encountered by gay Latinos in home and school settings. I paid particular attention to those that were related to systems of oppression, such as racism, heterosexism, homophobia, patriarchy, white supremacy, etc. (Goodman, 2001; hooks, 2004; Weber, 1998). Furthermore, I engaged in a narrative approach that specifically made use of semi-structured interviews, student participation on an online private and closed social media page, and the collection of photographs taken by participants on their campus.

Chapter two consists of a discussion of the theoretical framework and a literature review. The theoretical framework, resilience, is discussed within three main domains, psychology and developmental psychopathology, sociology and social work, and education. The literature review is primarily discussed in the context of risk and protective factors related to queer peoples' social identities and social contexts. In the third chapter, I discuss my research design, data collection, and analysis, which consisted of life stories within a narrative approach (Atkinson, 1995).

In chapter four, I outlined four vulnerabilities that emerged from the data: (1) notions of hierarchy among gay groups, (2) femmephobia in the queer community, (3) being a gay Latino in the era of Trump, and (4) racialized and homophobic incidents. In using a critical perspective

to understand resilience and determine what counts as such, I chose to highlight vulnerabilities that were connected to systems of oppression, including racism, heterosexism, and homophobia. Equally important to a resilience framework are protective factors, which serve in nurturing and protective roles that help counter the negative effects that derive from vulnerabilities. As such, chapter four also highlighted protective factors employed and accessed by gay Latino men to deal/cope with challenges they encountered. The four protective factors discussed here include: (1) the role of technology, (2) art, music, and writing, (3) education as an escape, and (4) influential people.

Since this study was also concerned with the specific ways that students' most salient social identities influenced their resilience, chapter five discussed the following six identities; 1) race/ethnicity, 2) religion, 3) social economic status, 4) undocumented status, 5) gender, and 6) sexuality. In the final chapter of this dissertation, chapter six, I began by proposing an expansion and redefining of theoretical notions of resilience based on the data. I then offer a discussion of the findings, offer four declarative conclusions about resilience and gay Latino men in college, and offer more extensive implications for practice and future research.

2.0 Review of the Literature

In order to more accurately account for the experiences of resilient gay Latino men in college and to challenge the theoretical underpinnings of a resilience framework, this review of the literature is divided into two sections. The first section addresses the theoretical framework, resilience, which is used to understand how gay Latino men manage to overcome different challenges throughout their lives. In particular, I explore the various conceptualizations of the term resilience across different disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and education as well as the ways it has been measured—both qualitatively and quantitatively. I then discuss literature that is specific to resilient Latinas/os. Since there is a dearth of scholarship that focuses on resilient gay Latinos, I included literature on Latinas/os more generally. I conclude this first section by reviewing some of the critiques on resilience.

The second section is a literature review on the experiences of gay Latino men. In reviewing the literature, I organized it based on risk factors, which are broadly understood as environmental issues that put students in danger, and protective factors, which are resources that students can access to mitigate potential harm from risk factors (Morales & Trotman, 2010). Protective factors can be understood as the connecting bridge between risks and resilience. I divided risk factors into contextual factors and those based on social identities. The former includes familial, educational, and religious and cultural contexts while race and sexuality are discussed under the social identities section. In discussing protective factors, I focused on contexts that are known to be imperative for gay Latinos, including family and friends as well as involvement with co-curricular organizations and the academic environment. Due to the scarcity

of literature on social identities as protective factors, I did not include such discussion. It is important to note that some of the risk and protective factors are included in both categories, as they can both enhance and hinder Latino students' experiences simultaneously.

2.1 Resilience Defined

Resilience is a term that is commonly used to refer to individuals who are successful in overcoming adversity throughout their lives. Although the term originates from the field of psychology, it is frequently used across multiple disciplines as well as in everyday conversations. While some individuals have used the concept to indicate a personality trait (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Wagnild & Young, 1993), others have used it to refer to a process (Luthar et al., 2000; Patrón & G.A. Garcia; 2016; Rutter, 1990; Rutter, 2012; Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). On a broad scale, the term has been scrutinized and situated within a range of disciplines, each accounting for a different phenomenon (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). According to Shaikh and Kauppi (2010), the different phenomena have been divided into two clusters; psychology and social work/sociology. The former is primarily influenced by a positivist perspective and includes six themes, which are discussed in the following sections (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). The second cluster highlights constructivist and interpretive worldviews consisting of two themes. As a result of the lack of consensus, it is no surprise that scholars take a different approach to understanding what resilience means or what it looks like and how it is measured. In studies situated within an education context, scholars have, for the most part, used the term to refer to academic resilience, which broadly refers to educational success despite adversity.

The meaning of resilience remains a contested debate, as it is a term that is not confined to one discipline or one life aspect. While some consider resilience to have stemmed from the field of psychology, others, like Tarter and Vanyukov (1999, as cited in Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010) believe that resilience has its most accurate meaning within physics and material sciences. Material scientists define resilience “as a property of material that allows it to resume its original shape or position after being bent, stretched or compressed” (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010, p. 155). The utilization of the term resilience, however, has predominantly been associated with people. Resilience is used on a regular basis to refer to individuals who overcome challenges or adversity (e.g. Fleming & Ledogar, 2008; Luthar et al., 2000; Luthar 2006; Martin & Marsh, 2006; Masten, 2001; Masten, Best, & Garnezy, 1990; Rutter, 2006; Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010).

According to Morales and Trotman (2010), “resilience means bouncing back, as in reverting back to an original state. Ideally, the original state is one of health and positive development” (p. 2). The possibility for a positive and healthy original state, however, is not always the case for everyone, especially not for gay Latinos or those that are most marginalized in society, as they may have been born under adverse situations to begin with. Naturally, if there is no threat or adversity to an individual’s development, he or she cannot be considered resilient (Masten, 2001). Adversity is described as a range of experiences that threaten the development of an individual, such as poverty, homelessness, child maltreatment, political conflict, disaster, and deficit caregiving (Werner, 1994; Wright, Masten, Narayan, 2012).

Still, other resilience definitions raise many questions. Daniel and Wassell (2002), for example, understand resilience as “normal development under difficult conditions” (p. 10). Normal, however, can be interpreted in a number of ways. What one person may consider normal may not be the case for someone else. Historically, and to this day, most psychological

literature as well as resilience scales have been created with white heterosexual people in mind, further normalizing and setting boundaries for what constitutes as resilience. By normalizing and setting particular criterions for determining who and what counts as resilience in relation to one group of people, white, gay people as well as people of color remain largely excluded. Since an overwhelming majority of resilience scholarship is on the dominant group, it becomes the point of reference against which other groups are compared to, ultimately defining what counts as good and right (Goodman, 2001). Moreover, because white, middle class, heterosexual norms permeate U.S. society, there is an emphasis on individualistic learning and competition, which are qualities reflected within a resilience framework. As a result, a concise definition remains vague and questionable.

Although there is not a single resilience definition (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010; Luthar et al., 2000), the common understanding is that people are either good at overcoming adversity or they are not. Such understanding indicates that resilience is a personality trait. Conceptually, however, there is a range of interpretations, each stemming from different disciplines, and even variations within the same fields, as discussed in this section. Due to the complexities associated with defining resilience, there has been a lack of consensus on what the term means or what resilience looks like (e.g. Curtis & Chiccehti, 2007; Hanewald, 2011; Luthar et al., 2000; Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010; Polk, 1997). Consequently, I organized the different definitions into separate clusters; psychology, sociology, and education, as I situate my understanding of resilience within these three domains.

2.1.1 Psychology and Developmental Psychopathology

As a term, resilience came about in the 1970's from the field of psychology and developmental psychopathology (Garmezy, 1995; Masten, 2001; Masten & Obradovic, 2006; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Rutter, 2012), which is the “study of behavioral health and adaptation from a developmental perspective” (Masten & Obradovic, 2006, p. 14). At the time, behavioral scientists wanted to “identify the correlates and markers of good adaptation among young people expected to struggle because of their genetic or environmental risk” (Masten & Obradovic, 2006, p. 14). According to Masten and Obradovic (2006), the first three waves of research on resilience stemmed from a behavioral perspective with the first wave focusing on the “search of knowledge about the etiology of serious mental disorders” (p. 14), with a particular focus on children who developed well despite their risky environments. The second wave of research focused on understanding the processes and regulatory systems using a list of potential assets that were connected to resilient children. The third wave was concerned with the efforts to promote resilience through prevention, intervention, and policy (Masten & Obradovic, 2006). Still, Wright et al. (2012) discuss a fourth wave of research that focuses on “multilevel dynamics and the many processes linking genes, neurobiological adaptation, brain development, behavior, and context at multiple levels” (p. 30). This last wave of research is fairly recent and intends to transform the ways that resilience has been applied in the past (Wright et al., 2012).

In providing an overview of the construct of resilience, Shaikh and Kauppi (2010) divided their work into two categories, psychology, and sociology and social work. Accordingly, the first strand of resilience

contains definitions derived primarily from the discipline of psychology and influenced by a positivist research orientation. In this cluster, definitions of resilience cover six

themes including (i) personality traits, (ii) positive outcomes/forms of adaptation despite high-risk, (iii) factors associated with positive adaptation, (iv) processes, (v) sustained competent functioning resistance, and (vi) recovery from trauma or adversity (p.155)

In early developmental psychopathology studies, researchers sought to understand disorder and deviance among adults based on patterns found during their childhood adversities (Garmezy, 1971, as cited in Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). Such studies revealed that while some children developed psychopathology in their adulthood years as a result of exposure to high biogenetic, familial, or socio-cultural risk factors others did not (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). These findings led some researchers to challenge ideas about early adversity leading to pathological development throughout one's life. Essentially, the findings were an opportunity for researchers to study resilience from a number of angles.

Sustained competence under stress and recovery from trauma are features that tend to be included within a resilience framework and that are best aligned with the psychological perspective (Werner, 1994). Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990) state that psychological research has used resilience in relation to three distinct kinds of phenomena: “good outcomes despite high-risk status, sustained competence under threat, and recovery from trauma” (p. 426). A risk is defined as “an elevated probability of an undesirable outcome” (Wright et al., 2012), such as episodes of physical or mental illness, divorce or unemployment of parents, alcohol and substance abuse and gambling (Hanewald, 2011).

2.1.2 Sociology and Social Work

The second cluster draws heavily from the fields of social work and sociology with a particular emphasis from a constructivist perspective (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). This category

only has two themes; human agency and resistance, and survival (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). The sociological and social work perspective highlight decision-making, resistance to structural conditions, and survival as major forms of resilience. Resilience interpretations related to this strand of research are considerate of familial and extra familial contexts as well as “structural and material conditions which shape and are shaped by resilience” (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010, p. 166). According to Shaikh and Kauppi (2010), support, in which one actively seeks and engages in relationships that support resilience, is of immense importance within sociological understandings of resilience. Furthermore, the action of seeking and engaging is what causes human agency to exist. Human agency is defined as intentionally making choices and taking particular actions (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). In order to make choices and take actions, however, one has to have a level of autonomy, which is known to increase as people get older.

In a study examining resilient urban adolescent mothers of color, Kennedy (2005) found that agency was a common thread among them. The women in the study displayed the ability to make strong positive connections with other people, especially those outside of their kin. The relationships that the mothers developed with mentors and teachers, among others, were instrumental in the development of their resilience. Those same relationships sparked a sense of agency that gave them “respite from the violence at home, showed them an alternative, nonviolent reality, guided and motivated them, and offered them love and support” (Kennedy, 2005, p. 1509). In identifying different phenomena within resilience, Polk (1996) included four patterns that serve as a support network for people; the dispositional pattern, the relational pattern, the situational pattern, and the philosophical pattern, which are all aligned with the sociological perspective.

It is in this strand of resilience that I situate my interpretation of the term. While I conceptualize resilience as a process, and process falls within the psychological perspective, I believe it can be understood as a process from the sociological strand, particularly because I see it as multilayered, including individuals and environments. Similarly, Masten (2001, 1994) describes it as a “phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development” (p. 228). Like Morales and Trotman (2010), I believe that everyone is capable of succeeding as long as there are structures in place that facilitate the process. In undergoing a process of resilience people are continually influenced by the choices and actions they make as well as from external structures found in their surrounding environments.

2.1.3 Education

In educational research, scholars have also understood resilience as success despite adversity, but particularly referring to those students who do well in school despite potential barriers to their education. This broad understanding has been applied to students across the educational pipeline. Cabrera and Padilla (2004), for example, use educational resiliency to refer to “students who despite economic, cultural, and social barriers will succeed at high levels” (p. 152). Similarly, Morales (2008) defines resilience as “educational achievement outcome anomalies that occur after an individual has been exposed to statistical risk factors” (p. 228).

Education research has, for the most part, focused on *academic resilience* as opposed to resilience more broadly. Academic resilience refers to “academic success and persistence despite stressful events and conditions during childhood and adolescence” (Perez et al., 2009, p. 154-155). According to Perez et al. (2009), some examples of risk factors found among academically resilient students include being a student of color in an inner city school or growing up in a home

where English is not the primary language. To that list, I would add students of color attending schools with hostile environments based on racial differences, different sexual orientations, or other instances where students' social identities might cause them to encounter some sort of adversity. Perez et al. (2009) also identified two types of protective factors among academically resilient students, personal and environmental resources. Personal protective factors include students who show a sense of control over their schoolwork. Additionally, they include personality characteristics and attitudes that people have and that assist them in mitigating hardships in their lives (Alva & Padilla, 1995). It is precisely through protective factors that some individuals may better handle adversity than others (Daniel & Wassell, 2002). Environmental resources include strong support networks—from family and friends to institutional agents, such as teachers, mentors, advisors etc. Aside from support networks, these factors provide sources of information that help people adapt to their environments.

In thinking about the two clusters discussed by Shaikh and Kauppi (2010), I would situate academic resilience within the sociological perspective, as it appears that educational researchers have aligned their work within this strand. The sociological perspective is inclusive of familial contexts as well as structural and material conditions that shape the process of resilience among students, which is something that has been noted in education literature. Students who are recognized as being academically resilient have also been labeled as “the statistical elite,” as they have managed to succeed under circumstances where they should have failed (Morales & Trotman, 2010, p. 1), especially when one considers the challenges they experienced.

2.2 Resilience Versus Resiliency

To help in the conceptualization of resilience, I make a distinction between the terms resilience and resiliency. Throughout this paper and in my research I use the term resilience to refer to a process (Kuperminc et al., 2009; Cicchetti & Tucker, 1994; Patrón & G.A. Garcia, 2016; Rutter, 1990), which some researchers began to do in the 1980's (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). Like Runner and Morris (1997), I argue that everyone can develop resilience, since it is a process and not an individual trait. I intentionally deviate from the utilization of the term resiliency, which is used to refer to a personal quality (Luthar et al., 2000). In a study by Wagnild and Young (1993), they identified five interrelated components that constituted resiliency as a personality trait: equanimity, perseverance, self-reliance, meaningfulness, and existential aloneness" (p. 167). Similarly, Connor and Davidson (2003) stated that resiliency embodies "the personal qualities that enable one to thrive in the face of adversity" (p. 76). Connor and Davidson (2003) went on to assert that resiliency is a:

developing strategy with a clear goal or aim, action orientation, strong self- esteem/ confidence, adaptability when coping with change, social problem solving skills, humor in the face of stress, strengthening effect of stress, taking on responsibilities for dealing with stress, secure/stable affectional bonds, and previous experiences of success and achievement (p. 77).

Resilience should not be solely understood as a fixed personality trait because there are people who successfully overcome challenges at one point in their lives but not in others (Rutter, 1987). Resilience, therefore, can and will vary by situation. Since I do not agree with resiliency interpretations, at no point do I use resilience to refer to an individual trait. The only times that I use the term resiliency or a definition that embodies individualistic like characteristics is when

discussing research that uses such terminology and interpretations.

Like Tusaie and Dyer (2004), I argue that since a range of factors, which vary by individual, influence resilience, the process of resilience that each person undergoes may vary. According to Tusaie and Dyer (2004), work, school performance, behavior adjustment, psychosocial adjustment, and physical health are domains that determine an individual's resilience. Tusaie and Dyer provided the following example demonstrating variation in resilience, "an individual from an abusive, impoverished childhood may demonstrate education and work resiliency by obtaining a doctoral degree and a high-paying job, but be unable to maintain intimate relationships and demonstrate impairment in the psychosocial domain" (p. 3). While I agree with Tusaie and Dyer's interpretation, I would expand on the domains to account for race/ethnicity, sexuality, undocumented status, and other factors that are pertinent to the gay Latino community. The domains are fluid and are bound to change based on an individual's identities, environment, stage in life, and overall life experiences.

Prior to referring to people as resilient, invulnerable was the concept that was utilized and eventually replaced due to it being misleading (Luthar et al., 2000; Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). According to Alva and Padilla (1995), Garmezy introduced the concept of invulnerability to refer to students who lived in economically disadvantaged homes or those who lived with parents that suffered from mental disorders. Aside from the term invulnerability, resilience, hardiness, adaptation, adjustment, mastery, plasticity, person-environment fit, and social buffering are other terms that are closely related and that have been utilized instead of invulnerability (Losel, Bliesener, Kofler, 1989). Although the term resilience has also been scrutinized, it is a term that continues to be used in psychology, and has been adapted for research in other fields, including

education. The following sections discuss the ways it has been measured as well as some of the most prominent critiques associated with resilience.

2.3 Measuring Resilience

Similar to the complexities associated with the conceptualization of resilience, the measuring of resilience has also varied. While some scholars have used a quantitative approach to determine who is resilient and who is not, others have used qualitative methods. According to Morales and Trotman (2010), surveys are the most common instrument used in quantitative studies while qualitative researchers have mostly relied on interviews with resilient individuals. This section discusses the two types of measurement, starting with a quantitative perspective.

2.3.1 Quantitative

From a quantitative standpoint, researchers have used scales and surveys to determine the level of resilience per individual (e.g. Connor & Davidson, 2003; Oshio, Kaneko, Nagamine, & Nakaya, 2003; Morales & Trotman, 2010; Sinclair & Wallston, 2004; Wagnild & Young, 1993), with individual scores on the scale determining how resilient one is. For example, Wagnild and Young (1993) developed a resilience scale with the purpose of identifying “the degree of individual resilience, considered a positive personality characteristic that enhances individual adaptation” (Wagnild & Young, 2003, p. 167). Interestingly, the scale was initially developed in a qualitative study with a sample of 24 older women but was determined that it could be used on men and people of all ages. The resilience scale consists of 25 statements with a seven point

Likert scale determining how strongly the person taking it agrees or disagrees with each of the items. The statements include, 1) “when I make plans I follow through with them,” 2) “I feel that I can handle many things at a time” and 3) When I’m in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it” (Wagnild & Young, 1993, p. 169). It is important to note that Wagnild and Young (1993) understand resilience as a personality trait that “moderates the negative effects of stress and promotes adaptation” (p. 165), as most quantitative research has done.

Connor and Davidson (2003) also developed a resilience scale, the Connor-Davidson scale, to measure people’s stress coping ability. Like Wagnild and Young (1993), Connor and Davidson use a 25-item list with a five point scale. The higher the score on the scale, the greater resilience an individual is said to possess. Among the 25 items are 1) “able to adapt to change,” 2) “sometimes fate or god can help, ” 3) “tend to bounce back after illness or hardship,” 4) and “strong sense of purpose” (Connor & Davidson, 2003, p. 78). Similarly, tests and questionnaires have also been administered in an attempt to determine “very low” to “very high” resilience (e.g. Psychometric tests, 2016; Psych tests, 2016).

In studying the academic resilience of undocumented Latina/o college students, Perez et al. (2009) administered a three-part survey with each of the participants in the study to learn more about their resilience. The first part of the questionnaire included open-ended questions about their academic achievements, civic engagement, and extracurricular activities, among other things. The second part consisted of demographic information while the third part included “various Likert-type style, self-reported questions designed to assess distress levels, perceived societal rejection due to undocumented status, bilingualism, student valuing of school, parental valuing of school, and friends valuing of school” (Perez et al., 2009).

Greeff and Ritman (2005), in a study that focused on uncovering the individual characteristics that allowed a family to cope with the loss of a parent, found that optimism, perseverance, faith, expression of emotions, and self-confidence, among other things, were all significant in the family's resilience. In this particular investigation, all of the families were "white, middle-class, and met the following criteria: (1) the death of a parent that had to have occurred 1 to 4 yr. prior, (2) at least one child was still living at home, and (3) the surviving parent was not currently involved in a committed relationship" (Greeff and Ritman, 2005, p. 37). Apart from the previously stated criteria that were used to measure resilience, Greeff and Ritman (2005) used McCubbin, Thompson, and McCubbin's (1996) family attachment and Changeability Index to measure family functioning as well as Block and Kremen's (1996) resiliency scale. Block and Kremen's (1996) scale focuses on how well each of the 14 items on a self-report describes the individual's lifestyle. Block and Kremen (1996) use a four point Likert scale, from 'does not apply' to 'applies very strongly.' Some of the statements in the self-report inventory include; "I quickly get over and recover from being startled, I enjoy dealing with new and unusual situations, I get over my anger at someone reasonably quickly" (Block & Kremen, 1996). Greeff and Ritman's (2005) findings are consistent with other studies that have also found that families in which a parent has died, optimism and being able to carry oneself in such difficult times allowed family members and therefore the entire families to be resilient. (McCubbin et al., 1996).

From the aforementioned studies, I noted three things that I learned and utilized in my conceptualization of resilience. For one, unlike the studies here, I was not interested in determining how resilient participants in this study were, as quantitative scales and tests have sought to do. The level of resilience that participants possess is beyond the scope of this

investigation. Secondly, I was not interested in understanding the functioning of resilience as a personality trait. In doing so, scholars fail to account for systems of oppression that have made it difficult for queer people of color to be successful. On the contrary, I understand resilience as a process that is intertwined with peoples' social identities. Thirdly, as a result of understanding resilience as a personality trait, most of the scales included "I" statements, something that I deviate from here. Within the scales, there were not any statements that mentioned or even alluded to the social identities that are explored here, such as gender, sexuality, or racial/ethnic background, making it difficult to have conversations about resilience coupled with racism, heterosexism, patriarchy, or xenophobia, among other things.

2.3.2 Qualitative

In qualitative studies there has been less emphasis on tests and scales and more focus on the creation of a criterion that must be met before individuals can be labeled as resilient (e.g. Gordon, 1996; Morales, 2008). For Morales (2008), students had to have completed at least 30 credits as a full time student at an elite institution, had a minimum grade point average of 3.0, and came from urban households where neither parent attended college in order to be considered resilient. In another study on 50 students of color, Morales and Trotman (2010) had a pre and post criteria that had to be met by all participants. In the pre criteria, "each student had parents with limited educational backgrounds (HS graduates or below) and who worked in low or semi-skilled jobs (Low SES), and each student self-identified as an ethnic minority" (p. 9). For the post criteria, each student had to have a minimum of 30 college credits and at least a 3.0 grade point average. Since all 50 participants in the study fulfilled both of the criterions, Morales and Trotman (2010) labeled them as resilient.

In studying the schooling processes and academic success of Mexican Americans, Campa (2010) labeled students as resilient if they had dropped out of the college and later returned or who had initially struggled with their academics, were enrolled in their third semester of college, had a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and were raised in working class homes. Here, one can note some consistency in the criteria that was used to label students as resilient between Morales (2008), Morales and Trotman (2010), and Campa (2010). In all three studies, researchers labeled students as resilient if they had spent at least one year in college, had a 3.0 GPA, and grew up in working class homes. These commonalities are consistent with the way resilience has been understood and measured in qualitative educational research.

In another investigation examining resilient and non-resilient Latina/o youth, Gordon (1996) described students as resilient if they were from a low-socioeconomic status, stressful backgrounds, and did well academically (grade point average of 2.75 or above). Those who were labeled non-resilient met the aforementioned criteria except for the grade point average. Essentially, academic achievement/GPA was the major difference between both groups of students. In studying the college aspirations and role of parents in developing educational resilience among Chicana students, Ceja (2004) focused on three components; 1) first generation college bound students, 2) self-identify as Chicana, and 3) come from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Comparably, in labeling Latino male students as resilient, Patrón and G.A. Garcia (2016) made sure that the participants fulfilled the following criteria:

- (1) had overcome at least one form of adversity identified in the literature as a potential barrier to academic success; (2) were enrolled in a selective college, indicating they successfully overcame the adversity faced; (3) were on track to graduating when we

interviewed them; and (4) demonstrated resilience as a process throughout their lives” (p. 530).

In their study, Patrón and G.A. Garcia (2016) conceptualized a definition of resilience to highlight a process that was influenced by the participants’ social identities and their environmental contexts. To determine if two Mexican heritage students were academically resilient, Cabrera and Padilla (2004) conducted 30-minute informal interviews to “assess the obstacles each overcame in terms of immigration, race, social class, and perceived discrimination” (p. 158). The researchers then decided that the students would be labeled as resilient. Unlike quantitative studies have shown, the resilience criteria presented in this section demonstrates that there are significant differences in the process to labeling students as resilient. While quantitative studies use Likert scales to measure resilience, qualitative studies, especially in education, have their own criteria, which is often based on academics As viewed here, the specific criteria that are used to label students as resilient within quantitative and qualitative studies are dependent on the context and focus of the respective studies.

In framing my understanding of resilience, I situate my study within the qualitative approach. I particularly aligned my interpretation of resilience to that of Patrón and G.A. Garcia (2016). In this study, I did not necessarily focus on academic resilience like the studies here. Instead, I emphasized types of adversity that were related to the students’ social identities, especially those connected to systems of oppression, which is something that has been excluded from the three aforementioned clusters as well as from qualitative and quantitative studies. The following section discusses research that has been conducted with resilient Latina/o students.

2.4 Resilient Latina/o Students

Due to scant literature that exclusively focuses on resilient gay Latino males, this subsection is encompassing of Latina/o students as a group. Using qualitative methods, Alva (1991) conducted one of the first studies on resilient Latina/o students by focusing on Mexican Americans in high school. Alva (1991) used the term “invulnerable” to refer to students “who sustain high levels of achievement motivation and performance, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly in school and, ultimately, dropping out of school” (p. 19). Alva (1991) found that Mexican American tenth-graders who held positive views about their academics and experienced less difficulties in intergroup relations with other students were more likely to be successful in school. Additionally, support networks, particularly from teachers and friends, were more common among resilient students (Alva, 1991), aligning both with the psychological and sociological strands discussed in the theoretical framework section.

In the same thread, Arellano and Padilla (1996) conducted an investigation on Latina/o undergraduate students who were identified as invulnerable. The researchers divided the 30 participants into three groups that were dependent on their parents’ educational attainment. “In Group One, parents had attained no more than 11 years of school. In Group Two at least one parent was a high school graduate. Group Three consisted of at least one parent who had graduated from college” (Arellano & Padilla, 1996, p. 492). Environmental factors, such as students’ beliefs, values and attitudes, quality of student-teacher interactions, and the general school climate, proved to have a positive influence on the students’ academic resilience (Arellano & Padilla, 1996). Ultimately, Arellano and Padilla (1996) found that students from all three groups managed to be resilient despite their respective hardships.

Familial support is a prominent theme in the experiences of resilient Latinas/os, whether enrolled in four-year colleges and universities or community colleges. In examining resilience among Latina/o community college students, Campa (2010) found that participants' families contributed to the students' successes. Students' parents and the sacrifices they made throughout their lives served as motivation for students to develop resilience and do well in school. It was a combination of familial and community factors that promoted what Campa (2010) calls critical resilience among participants. For example, Crista, one of the participants, shared how she felt motivated and empowered to help the people in her community and peers in school who had difficulty with reading and math. As a result, she started a tutoring program as well as devoted time to helping kids how to read.

Much like Campa's (2010) findings, Cabrera and Padilla (2004) found that students who watched their mothers work as agricultural workers were motivated to work hard in school to avoid working under similar conditions. It was the students' parents and the hardships they underwent that pushed them to develop resilience and work hard in order to repay their parents for all of their work and sacrifices (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004). In discussing the sociological perspective, Shaikh and Kauppi (2010) mention that it is significant for individuals to actively seek and engage in relationships that support resilience, which is something that was common in the aforementioned studies. Furthermore, some Latina/o students displayed a sense of agency by looking for help when needed and getting involved on campus, which is also associated with the sociological strand.

More recently, Patrón and G. A. Garcia (2016) conducted a study with Latino males where they conceptualized resilience as a process. Patrón and G.A. Garcia (2016) examined the social identities and environmental contexts that fostered resilience and found that involvement

with co-curricular activities, such as a skateboarding group, college preparatory programs, and Greek organizations were significant in the students' experiences. Andres, for instance, participated in the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program, where he learned about the process of applying to college. AVID provided Andres with the opportunity to visit college campuses and learn about different types of higher education institutions (Patrón & G.A. Garcia, 2016). Like Andres, Alejandro also joined AVID in elementary school, which instilled a college going identity for him and encouraged him to enroll in challenging courses to prepare him for college. Additionally, Andres' skateboarding crew removed him from engaging in gang activities. Patrón and G.A. Garcia (2016) identified challenges that Latino males encountered throughout their lives and demonstrated how support networks, educational structures, and their social identities simultaneously contributed to the development of their resilience as they each navigated different spaces—both inside and outside of school. Latino males found motivation to succeed in life through social identities that are often considered oppressive, such as being low income, undocumented, and queer.

Research that focuses on resilient Latinas has also been situated within education (e.g. Ceja, 2004; Graff, McCain, Gomez-Vilchis, 2013). For instance, Ceja (2004) found that parental messages, both direct and indirect, about the importance of a college education were significant in developing college aspirations and a sense of educational resilience for Chicanas. Although many of the participants' parents had low levels of formal education and limited fluency in English, they managed to support their kids through direct and indirect messages (Ceja, 2004). Direct influences included important messages about their future if they did well in school. Mary, one of the Chicanas, said,

When they [parents] come from work they're always telling us, "do your homework."

They motivate you. They always tell us, “if you get good grades not only will we buy you this, but in the long run you’ll come to see that it’s going to help you.” They make us see that (Ceja, 2004, p. 347)

Indirect influences, on the other hand, involved parents’ lived experiences. Several of the participants talked about their parents’ struggles at work, including having to wake up early in the morning, and how that motivated them to persist.

For Latina student farm workers with children, Graff et al. (2013) found that Latinas developed the necessary academic resilience to be successful through family support and the desire to instill values of responsibility to their children. Additionally, participants were motivated to do well and work hard through their farmworker backgrounds (Graff et al., 2013). Contrary to some of the participants’ experiences, however, other Latinas expressed how they did not receive support from their parents to complete their undergraduate degree. Some Latinas were advised to discontinue their college careers and were instead encouraged to contribute to their families’ financial situation by working. Two of the five participants were particularly questioned as to why they were spending time, energy, and money on a college education and whether it would create conflict among their families. Lupe, one of the participants, shared, “My parents didn’t think highly of school. I am one of six and still (. . .) it was, ‘Why are you going to college if you are only going to work out in the fields (. . .) going to get married and have children?’” (Graff et al., 2013, p. 339). Instead of hindering their educational outlook, however, the Latinas found strength to pursue an education by diverging from traditional roles for women. Most of the studies discussed here highlighted the importance of family in facilitating academic resilience among Latina/o students. Parents and other family members often served as motivators

that pushed students to do well in school. At the same time, school contexts were important, as they offered students resources to be successful.

2.5 Resilience Critiques

The term resilience has received multiple criticisms across different fields for a variety of reasons. One of the most prominent critiques is that some children show signs of competence in certain areas but fail to excel in others. Such variation leads scientists to question the “veridicality of the construct” (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 548). Luthar et al. (2000) discuss how some individuals who were successful despite adversity still struggled with covert psychological difficulties, for instance. Resilience, however, should not be perceived as the sole answer to all adversity in a person’s life. Being resilient should not mean that individuals must be successful in all life aspects. Such ideology places individuals at the center and holds them accountable when things do not work out positively for them.

The lack of consensus on what resilience means is another critique that is often associated with the term (Luthar et al., 2000). Shaikh and Kauppi (2010) discuss inconsistencies with resilience definitions by listing eight kinds of resilience phenomena across different disciplines (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). Moreover, there are issues with the conceptualization of resilience, as some define it as a personal trait and others as a dynamic process. Although resilience and resiliency refer to different things, there are people who use the term interchangeably, which can be problematic (Luthar et al., 2000).

One of the major concerns with the term resilience stems from the literature on ego-resiliency developed by Block and Block (1980). Ego-resiliency is used to refer to specific

characteristics possessed by an individual (e.g. Block & Block, 1980; Luthar et al. 2000). More specifically, Block and Kremen (1996) describe ego-resiliency as, “the linkages of the ego structures that keep the personality system within tenable bounds or permit the finding again of psychologically tenable adaptational modes” (p. 350-351). Additionally, the psychology dictionary (2014) states that ego-resiliency is “a personality with the ability to vary and adapt and express emotional impulses depending on social demands” while describing resilience as “the ability to adapt or rebound quickly from change, illness, or bad fortune.” There are two central dimensions that differentiate ego-resiliency and resilience: “ego-resiliency is a personality characteristic of the individual, whereas resilience is a dynamic developmental process. Second, ego-resiliency does not presuppose exposure to substantial adversity, whereas resilience, by definition, does” (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 546). In supporting Luthar et al.’s. (2000) argument, Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) discuss limitations associated with resilience in a study on adolescents and state that resilience is not a static trait or a quality of an adolescent that is always present. “Rather, resilience is defined by the context, the population, the risk, the promotive factor, and the outcome” (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005, p. 404). This is precisely why it is important to note the difference between resilience and resiliency, with the latter referring to a trait.

Scholars outside of psychology, like Davis (2014) in social work, have also critiqued the construct of resilience. According to Davis (2014), examining resiliency models takes away from the larger picture, “which is to reduce suffering by promoting greater social justice and social equity” (Davis, 2014, p. 1). For Davis (2014), it appears that one cannot simultaneously and successfully utilize resiliency models while working towards social justice. I, nonetheless, argue that it is indeed possible to promote social justice while using a construct of resilience, especially

if resilience is understood as a process and it accounts for social identities that are important to queer people of color, such as sexuality, race, immigration, religion, etc., and are situated within systems of oppression.

In the same line of critique, Greeff and Ritman (2005) studied individual characteristics as a resource to assist a family's resilience when there is a loss of a parent and suggested resiliency like constructs. Greeff and Ritman (2005) found that the most important personality characteristics for family members were optimism, perseverance, faith, expression of emotion, and self-confidence. The authors conclude their study by making a call to psychologists, therapists, and educators to support families by encouraging the "family's most resilient member to strengthen the family's resilience after the loss of a loved one" (Greeff & Ritman, 2005, p. 41). I, however, find it problematic to identify the family's *most resilient individual* and focus the attention on him or her. What happens if there is not anyone in the family that is resilient? Or what happens if someone lives alone? By emphasizing personal aspects, it opens the possibility to place blame on the individual for failing to overcome adversity, which is what this study attempts to diverge from. Alike, Rutter (2012) states,

Masten and Powell (2003) have argued that promotive factors tend to operate in the same way in all populations, and hence, that resilience can best be promoted by focusing on competence. Such promotive factors include cognitive abilities, temperament, parenting quality, and good schools (p. 336).

It is a mistake and oversimplification, however, to state that promotive factors function in the same ways for all people regardless of race/ethnicity, sexuality, age, cultural background, social economic status, and access to resources. There are even intragroup differences between different racial/ethnic groups, so to make such assumption is inaccurate. Fergus and Zimmerman

(2005) note how resilience processes may be distinct for different groups of people.

2.6 Risk Factors

According to Morales and Trotman (2010), risk factors within resilience literature are defined as “environmental issues that place students in potential danger” (p. 5). They can be both a result of biological and/or environmental influences that increase the likelihood of a given problem (Fraser, 1997). Poverty, parental divorce, parental mental illness, lack of parental care, growing up in an abusive home, war, substance abuse, premature birth, low birth weight, inferior schools, and child maltreatment are some of the most discussed risk factors in resilience literature (Denny, Clark, Fleming, & Wall, 2004; Luthar, 1991, Masten, 2001, 2014; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Morales & Trotman, 2010; Murray, 2003, Rutter, 1987; Wright et al., 2013). According to Rutter (1987), risk factors are known to directly lead to disorder, although the level of disorder is known to vary by situation.

For gay Latinos, risk factors can be manifested in a range of ways that move beyond conventional understandings of risks, including the aforementioned. In this literature review, I focus on contextual risk factors, including family, education, and the church as well those that are connected to social identities, such as race, gender, and sexuality. While the following risk factors are not necessarily labeled as such in the literature, they are environmental and cultural influences that are known to complicate gay Latino males’ experiences—both inside and outside of higher education contexts. Moreover, it is important to note that risk factors are known to outweigh protective factors in the literature on gay Latinos, as viewed in the following sections.

2.6.1 Familial Contexts

Unlike the experiences of Latino males described in recent literature (Carrillo, 2013; Ojeda, Navarro, Morales, 2011; Perez, 2014; Perez & Taylor, 2015; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Saenz, Bukoski, Lu, Rodriguez, 2013), in which there is minimal to no mention of their sexuality, gay Latino men have dissimilar experiences within their familial structures. Since Latina/o families are known for being homophobic, it is often perceived that the traditional values within them become a burden to the development of a gay identity for Latino men (Guzman, 2006). Latina/o families require commitment to a patriarchal form of governance, which create barriers in the identity development of gay people (Almaguer, 1991). Patriarchy, “the systematic domination of women by men,” subsequently leads to gender specific roles for men and women (Abalos, 2002, p. 53). These gender roles designate the functions and responsibilities men and women should have in their families. Among them is the idea that men are the head of the home, protectors, and providers of the household (Colon, 2001).

At an early age, Latino males are taught to live up to the aforementioned roles in order to achieve manhood (Ocampo, 2012; Peña-Talamantes, 2013b). They are simultaneously encouraged to play sports, as it is an activity that is associated with being a man (e.g. Coronado, 2009). Parents, extended kin, and society at large are known to encourage and applaud when a man engages in such behavior, as it is perceived as symbolizing what a “real man” is supposed to do (Ocampo, 2012). In failing to fulfill a masculine identity, gay Latino men are marginalized by their families and extended kin and are known to encounter social and personal penalties, which can take different forms—from feelings of isolation to flat out rejection from family and friends.

The bond between Latinas/os and their families is considered very strong, which allows for little to no personal autonomy (Guzman, 2006; Landale & Oropesa, 2007). The lack of

autonomy is what contributes to the lack of acceptance for those who identify as gay, as it is the family that goes before individual concerns. B. Garcia (1998), for instance, argues that identity development for gay Latino men is more difficult due to familial dynamics and influence from their larger kin network. A lot of times, gay men feel that they need to suppress their gay identity for their families' well being. The underlying pressures within the Latina/o community often force Latinos to stay in the closet, since they would be ridiculed if their sexuality were made public. Due to the difficulties, Latino men are known to keep their sexuality hidden, engage in activities that make them appear less gay, and associate with people that embody masculine like traits (e.g. Colon, 2001; B. Garcia, 1998; Ocampo, 2014; Sanchez et al., 2016). To avoid negative responses and other forms of rejection, gay Latinos are known to assume a false heterosexual identity by trying to change their image (Colon, 2001; Ocampo, 2014; Sanchez et al., 2016). Ocampo (2014) used the term moral management to refer to "the hyperconscious monitoring of gender presentation, behaviors and mannerisms, voice inflections, clothing choices, cultural tastes and even friendship networks" (p. 156). Gay individuals may engage in moral management in order to maintain rapport and social support from family. Moreover, Ocampo (2014) mentioned that the extent to which strategies of moral management are used vary by person, as some may be in the closet while others may be out.

In an ethnographic study on six Latino gay and bisexual men, Colon (2001) found that some of the participants lacked the emotional support and interdependence that is commonly found in Latina/o families. Family members often pretended that the participants' sexual orientation were nonexistent, avoiding the opportunity to have a conversation about their sexuality (Colon, 2001). When aware of their child's sexuality, some families were quick to judge them and/or distance themselves. One gay Latino male shared, "My family drifted away

for some time. They did not want to talk to me and they rejected me. Now things are better but it took time. My relationship with my extended family stopped” (Coronado, 2009, p. 41). Others talked about being completely cut off from their families and not being invited to family functions while others talked about feeling like acquaintances with their fathers instead of actual family. Coronado also found that some participants were chastised for engaging in what the father considered unmanly behavior. Since patriarchy demands that men kill off the emotional parts that make up who they are, as they are associated with women (hooks, 2004), some men feel forced to rid themselves from feminine characteristics. If men fail to rid themselves of traits that are associated with women, they are subjected to being ridiculed, bullied, and marginalized to the fullest extent, even from their immediate families (Coronado, 2009).

In a study examining the functioning of familismo among gay and queer Latino male collegians, Patrón (2016) found that familial dynamics changed when involving queer men. Familismo is a cultural value that emphasizes a strong identification of individuals with their families as well as strong feelings of loyalty (Landale & Oropesa, 2007; Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987). Not only did participants feel like they could no longer count on their families for support but they also felt rejected by their parents, siblings, and their extended kin. Matias, a senior in college, talked about the denial of his mother upon knowing about his sexuality by questioning him and his sexuality (Patrón, 2016). Matias’ mother instilled fear in him by saying that his father would be mad and leave their family if he found out. Other participants in the study expressed similar feelings.

At the same time, familial rejection is associated with health outcomes (Ryan et al., 2009). In a study on 224 white and Latina/o young queer adults between 21-25, those who reported high levels of familial rejection were 8.4 times more likely to report having attempted

suicide and 5.9 times more likely to be depressed (Ryan et al., 2009). Similarly, D. I. Garcia, Gray-Stanley, and Ramirez-Valles (2008) found that queer Latinos who experienced rejection from the church and their families expressed feelings of shame and depression while Kitts (2005) points to the association between being queer and higher risks of suicide.

2.6.2 Religious and Cultural Contexts

Aside from families, the larger Latina/o community and church simultaneously condemn gay Latinos for their sexuality (e.g. Abalos, 2002; Angelo, 2005; Coronado, 2009; Ocampo, 2014). Since religion is considered one of society's central institutions, it is known to have a major influence in the lives of gay people (D. I. Garcia et al., 2008). Christianity, for example, is known to teach intolerant views towards people in the gay community while viewing gay self-identification as a sin (D. I. Garcia et al., 2008). One of the participants in Coronado's (2009) study found religion and Latina/o culture to be influential in his ability to self-identity as gay. As a result, the participant was in denial about his sexuality and started "messaging around" with girls.

Growing up, many Latinos felt that they could not be open about their sexuality based on stigma from the Catholic church (Coronado, 2009). In a study on the coming out process for gay Latino men, Angelo (2005) found that a majority of the participants did not feel accepted by their church because of their sexuality. Furthermore, research has shown that some Latino men do not even consider the idea of mixing sexuality and religion, pushing them away from the church (Camacho, 2016). The church and Latina/o culture often times work in similar ways in terms of attitudinal and behavioral expectations for Latino men. Tony, for instance, talked about people from his native state in Mexico, Chihuahua, being disappointed when he mentioned being gay, as people from Chihuahua are known for being hyper masculine (Camacho, 2016).

As a result of familial and cultural rejection, some Latino men, consciously or subconsciously, repress their identities by trying to convince themselves that they are not gay, since it is unaccepted in Latina/o cultural contexts (Abalos, 2002). In the same line of research, Patrón (2016) found that queer Latino men had negative experiences with their families due to cultural expectations. One of the participants, Diego, a first generation college student, talked about the difficulty in mixing his cultural identity and sexuality since it made it difficult for him to be taken seriously (Patrón, 2016). For many gay Latinos, it becomes difficult to embrace both their sexuality and Latina/o culture because they are often put in opposition to one another.

In an attempt to redefine what it means to be a Latino male in contemporary U.S. society, Abalos (2002) discussed the influence of both Latina/o culture and the church. Abalos (2002) shared his personal experiences growing up as well as the notion of male domination, which he argued is rooted in patriarchy but with a direct relationship to Latina/o culture and the church. To Abalos (2002), the church reinforced patriarchy and male domination by teaching men to resist “the temptations of the world, sexuality, and women” (p. 10). According to the catholic church, men were supposed to view women as saints who had to be put on a pedestal while Latina/o culture raised men “to enjoy sexuality as a pleasure *from* women not *with* women” (Abalos, 2002, p. 10), causing Abalos to be caught in between two structural forces. Although competing forces, they are both hostile towards women, even if in different ways.

Due to differing socializing processes from each system, Latino men find themselves denying aspects of both their masculine and feminine selves. These belief systems often prevent queer men from exerting their sexuality, as it is perceived as being feminine. Being effeminate is considered a derogatory term in Latina/o culture, as it symbolizes a lack of “sexual prowess” among men. To be a man, means to conquer and penetrate women. Failing to do so only proves

the absence of a masculine identity among men (Abalos, 2002).

In a study examining the religious trajectories of gay Latinos, D. I. Garcia et al. (2008) sought to demonstrate the way that religion played a role in the participants' lives in three different time frames; childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. During childhood, Latinos talked about being educated on Catholicism by women in their lives, such as their mothers and grandmothers. These women were known for attending church every Sunday, praying consistently, and forcing their kids to attend as well. For instance, Lorenzo shared how he attended church with his mom for many years, even if he did not want to go (D. I. Garcia et al., 2008). Aside from family, religious schools were an additional source of influence in the participants' childhoods. In the next phase, adolescence, D. I. Garcia et al. (2008) found that a majority of the participants had come into terms with their sexuality and had distanced themselves from families. As a result of disapproval from the church due to their sexualities, many gay Latinos stopped attending church altogether. During adulthood, only 26 out of the original 66 participants identified as catholic while others had converted to other religions and others indicated no religious affiliation (D. I. Garcia et al., 2008).

2.6.3 Educational Contexts

To exacerbate issues associated with being a gay Latino, postsecondary institutions lack safe spaces for the queer community (Patton, 2011; Rhoads, 1997; Sánchez, 2014; Walters & Hayes, 1998) and are often hostile environments for queer-identified people (e.g D'Augelli, 1989; 1992; Rankin, 2003; Rhoads, 1997; Wickens & Sandlin, 2010). Beemyn (2003) noted that prior to 1990, there were only five professionally staffed LGBT centers on college campuses. As a result in the lack of safe spaces, queer college students may not perform to the best of their

academic capabilities and may not immerse themselves in the college culture or take advantage of co-curricular opportunities (Rankin, 2005). In studying the experiences of gay and lesbian college students, D'Augelli (1989, 1992) found that a majority of the students underwent some sort of verbal abuse while others were threatened with violence. Consequently, only 3% out of 121 lesbian and gay male undergraduates felt "very comfortable" disclosing their sexual orientations to others (D'Augelli, 1992). Gay and lesbian students reported the following as reasons not to report their incidents; (1) fear of further harassment, (2) if they filed a complaint, students expected no help from authorities, and (3) if attacked based on their perceived status then they felt like they had to disclose their sexuality (D'Augelli, 1992). For Latino males in particular, the educational environment may be hostile, adding to the familial and cultural constraints already discussed.

According to Sánchez (2014), hostile college environments are a result of normative heterosexist practices, such as those found during daily lectures and in the lack of safe spaces. In a study on six gay Latino males in college, L.F. Garcia (2015) found that there was few spaces outside of the classroom that made them feel comfortable, leading Latino males to isolation. Furthermore, students felt like their racialized experiences were not considered in programming, as most of the students on campus were white and therefore excluded Latina/o student perspectives (L.F. Garcia, 2015). Although participants in the study also expressed having found resources on campus that supported their Latino identity, there were not any that specifically catered to being a gay Latino (L. F. Garcia, 2015). Since the college environment is considered a place where sexual identity development is known to occur (Stevens, 2004), gay Latinos can miss out on such opportunities. According to Stevens (2004) "sexual identity development is often very prominent and occurs within the context of their college experience. For some gay

men their sexual identity development occurs simultaneously and in conjunction with race, gender, and religious identity development” (p. 185). However, gay Latinos may be deprived of having positive experiences that are inclusive of their race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.

In studying the experiences of 40 gay and bisexual male students in college, Rhoads (1997) discussed issues of harassment and discrimination that the participants faced on and off campus. Consequently, students intentionally avoided interacting with athletes and fraternity members, as they were considered the most homophobic on campus (Rhoads, 1994; 1997). Some students shared stories about being physically attacked, leading them to the hospital. Additionally, students talked about their professors failing to understand the complexities of sexuality, complicating their collegial experiences even further (Rhoads, 1997). Coming out in college residence halls reflects many of the same sentiments that have been outlined in this section. In a qualitative study examining the coming out process for 20 queer students in residence halls, Evans and Broido (1999) outlined ten major themes. Among them was the influence of the environment on whether or not students decided to disclose their sexuality. Deciding whether to come out to roommates or not, for example, was challenging for some students because they were scared of being beat up or harassed. Negative comments about queer students being shot, nuked, and put on a desert island made students feel unsafe as well as caused them to keep their sexuality hidden (Evans & Broido, 1999).

Due to negative experiences of queer students on college campuses, Rhoads (1997) advocated for the creation of more safe spaces (e.g. student organizations), encouraged student affairs professionals to become acquainted with the complexities of the coming out process, and educating the larger campus on queer issues, as students were often left with that burden. Like Rhoads (1997), Evans and Broido (1999) recommended for higher education institutions to

further explore the climates of different departments within the school, including residence halls, sororities, and fraternities. Since 18 of the 20 participants were white, Evans and Broido (1999) suggested that additional research be conducted on students from different backgrounds. Many of these recommendations remain an imperative concern for higher education institutions today.

2.6.4 Race and Sexuality and the Influence on the Process of Coming Out

Due to the intertwinement of race, sexuality, and the process of coming out for gay Latinos, this section addresses the ways in which such identities influence their process of coming out. In many ways, the literature discussed here is consistent with my discussions on familial and cultural influences but with a specific focus on coming out. Coming out refers to the process of disclosing one's sexual orientation, usually starting with acceptance of self and then coming out to others (Helminiak, 2006; Rhoads, 1994). Like conceptualizations of resilience, most research on the queer community and on the coming out process has largely focused on white middle class men and is known to lack complexities associated with race/ethnicity (Cass, 1979; Ocampo, 2014; 2012; Sanchez et al., 2016; Wall & Washington, 1991; Washington & Wall, 2006). As a result, theories of development along with notions of the coming out process cannot and should not be applied to people of color. Applying such frameworks to understand the Latino experience, for example, can result in a distorted analysis and portrayal of them, especially since issues of race/ethnicity and culture would be overlooked.

Latinos who are members of the gay community often encounter many difficulties throughout their lives as a result of their race/ethnicity and their sexual orientations, such as not being able to fully come out in public without being singled out and rejection from kin networks and the church (e.g. Akerlund & Cheung, 2000; Camacho, 2016; Coronado, 2009; Espitia, 2007;

D. I. Garcia et al., 2008; Ocampo, 2014; Patrón, 2016; Wall & Washington, 1991). Consequently, Latinos may feel that they do not know who they are, what part of their identity is more important, or feel that they do not have anyone for support or to talk to about their sexuality (Wall & Washington, 1991; Washington & Wall, 2010). Due to such experiences, the process of coming out does not always occur for Latinos, leading them to isolation and susceptible to health issues (L.F. Garcia, 2015; Wall & Washington, 1991). Queer Latinos often choose not to come out to family or friends due to fear of the way they may be perceived. Instead, Latino men try to fulfill the archetypical role that their cultural values and families have assigned them (Akerlund & Cheung, 2000; Colon, 2001; Coronado, 2009; Ocampo, 2014), which include defending and protecting the family and being the head of the home (Akerlund & Cheung, 2000; Colon, 2000; Schwartz et al., 2009).

One of the reasons why minoritized groups might decide to “stay in the closet” is because they are afraid of “losing socio-economic or social support from family and co-ethnic networks” (Ocampo, 2014, p. 158). Ocampo (2014) discusses that while being marginalized from one’s family can affect anyone, regardless of racial/ethnic background, white middle class queers can keep their financial stability as well as find it easier to find support networks to substitute for the loss of their familial support. In reviewing literature on gay Latino masculinities, Ocampo (2012) mentions that access to economic resources plays a larger influence than culture in Latino men’s experiences, including their coming out process. Latino men who have economic capital, for example, feel a sense of autonomy to disclose their sexualities if they would like. Those who do not have financial stability may choose to keep their sexuality hidden in order to prevent the possibility of losing access to their families’ economic resources. Since Latina/o families are known to be homophobic and rejecting of gay men, it possibly signals why some low-income

gay Latinos may prefer to stay in the closet. Here, one can note the intertwinement of race/ethnicity, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and family in the coming out process of gay Latinos.

A second reason why Latino men may be hesitant about coming out is because they do not want their sexuality to negatively influence the way their family is perceived by the larger community (Ocampo, 2014). Consequently, gay Latinos may find it necessary to repress their sexuality and instead attempt to embody a masculine identity for the sake of their families' reputation. Furthermore, staying in the closet would ensure that gay Latinos keep their family ties (Ocampo, 2014). In the same thread, Diaz (1998) argues that gay Latinos are socialized to think and behave in certain ways that make them appear as real men by societal standards. Among them is the idea that a male identity is defined by traits that are associated with heterosexual men including: courage, strength, and domination. Due to such notions about what it means to be a real man, gay Latinos struggle with their identity development and often decide to keep their sexuality hidden.

According to D. I. Garcia et al., (2008), religion also plays a major role in whether gay Latinos decide to come out or not. Since they understand that their families and the church would reprimand them for being gay, many have a difficult time coming out at an early age. Not coming out and attempting to be someone they are not, however, can lead Latino males to experience a range of struggles. Since at an early age, they know they are different and likely unaccepted, the possibility of them experiencing anxiety, health disorders, suicidal thoughts and becoming depressed increases (Abalos, 2002; Balsam et al., 2011; Guarnero & Flaskerud, 2008; Ocampo, 2012; Sun et al., 2016).

Still, other researchers have found that there are both similarities and differences in the

coming out process of youth from different racial/ethnic groups. Rosario, Schrimshaw, and Hunter (2004) found that Black, Latina/o, and white youth experienced developmental milestones related to their queer identity at around the same time and that they reached out to the queer community. In regards to Latina/o youth specifically, Rosario et al. (2004) found that they reported similar levels of comfort about others being aware of their sexuality as much as white youth did. Rosario et al. (2004) suggest that Latinas/os may be open to their families about their sexuality because they may feel that they will not be abandoned or rejected due to notions of familismo. Familismo, however, does not always function in the same manner for queer Latino men (Patrón, 2016), as viewed in earlier sections.

2.7 Protective Factors

Contrary to risk factors in a resilience framework, protective factors serve nurturing and protective roles that help counter the negative effects that derive from a variety of risks, contributing to a resilience development. According to Cicchetti (2003), it was Garmezy and colleagues who started examining the importance of protective factors among at risk populations in the 1970's. Since then, identifying protective factors has become an imperative concern for practitioners and researchers who work with individuals who, in one way or another, encounter adversity throughout their lives. Masten (2014) suggests that protective factors are shaped by biological and cultural evolution, which includes “close attachment relationships, reward systems and mastery motivation, intelligence and executive functions, and cultural belief systems” (p. 9). Morales and Trotman (2010) define protective factors as “strengths students have (or can access) that work to mitigate the risk factors” (p. 5). In studying the experiences of resilient Latina/o

students, Morales and Trotman (2010) organized protective factors by three categories including dispositional, environmental, and familial. Dispositional protective factors included persistence, high self-esteem, a strong work ethic, and self-motivation while environmental factors included caring school personnel, clubs/organizations, tracking, and church sponsored initiatives. The final category, familial, included siblings as role models, high parental expectations, and mother modeling a strong work ethic. In studying resilience among children, Masten et al. (1990) identified high IQ scores, competent adult parenting figures, the church, and effective schools as positive educational experiences.

As viewed here, there tends to be some variation in protective factors between educational and psychological contexts. The following discussion primarily focuses on family and friends as well as involvement with co-curricular organizations and the academic environment as contextual protective factors for gay Latinos. Due to the dearth of scholarship on social identities as protective factors, I did not include such discussion. In a recent study on resilient Latinos, Patrón and G.A. Garcia (2016) began to theorize about resilience as a process that was influenced by the participant's social identities and environmental contexts. The authors found that while social economic status, queer identity, and undocumented status, for example, were connected to challenges throughout the students' educational journeys, they also served as protective factors, as they found motivation to succeed in those very same identities. This investigation expands on Patrón and Garcia's (2016) study by focusing on gay Latinos.

2.7.1 Familial Contexts

Support from family and friends have proven to have a positive influence in the education and overall lives of queer males (e.g. Anderson, 1998; Camacho, 2016; Coronado, 2009; Espitia,

2007; Patrón, 2016; Patrón & G. A. Garcia, 2016; Peña-Talamantes, 2013a; Stevens, 2004). Coronado (2009), for instance, highlighted that gay Latinos in his study found support from friends and coworkers after they came out. Other participants talked about their support group being close friends, others who were queer, and gay and lesbian support groups on their college campuses. In a sense, friends and coworkers filled a void that was absent from family.

In the same thread, Patrón (2016) found supportive experiences for gay Latinos among their families. Matias, for example, disclosed his sexuality to his father while in college. Upon disclosing his sexuality, Matias' father responded by saying that he wished he would have known earlier so that he could have helped Matias cope with the hardships and difficulties Matias faced. Although Matias' father knew that something was wrong, he preferred waiting until Matias was ready to share whatever he was experiencing. Similar to his father's reaction, Matias' sister was completely supportive and even advised him to leave the house in order to grow as a person. Matias' sister understood that the home environment was hostile and would hinder his identity development and therefore encouraged him to leave. Comparably, Camacho (2016) found that students like Christian had supportive relationships with their siblings. In talking about his sister, Christian said that she was the first person he disclosed his sexuality with and offered him full support. His sister also helped him in his coming out process, particularly to their parents. Help and encouragement from older siblings has also proven to be significant, particularly if they have experienced similar things in the past and know how to better navigate familial spaces, especially in terms of knowing when and what things to keep quiet about (Camacho, 2016). Additionally, familial support is known to increase the self-esteem of queer students (Savin Williams, 1990).

Due to familial risk factors, students like Dario, another participant, preferred opening up

and receiving help from people outside of his family (Camacho, 2009). Similarly, Ocampo (2014) found that Alvaro, a participant in his study, preferred to have separate groups of friends, including family, school friends, and gay friends (Ocampo, 2014). In a study examining the strengths of gay male youth, Anderson (1998) found that participants used their support groups to help them with their developmental processes. In turn, these support networks helped them come out to their parents. By taking initiative in looking for support groups outside of their families, the gay youth received advice on navigating their sexuality within their families, which led some of them to be open about it, something that may not have occurred had they not received help from their support networks (Anderson, 1998). Since queer people are known to have less support than non-queer people, friends and mentors outside of the family become an imperative component (Anderson, 1998). In discussing the coming out process for gay Latinos, Espitia (2007) found that out of the 12 participants in his study, five of them became aware of their sexuality in middle school although they did not necessarily come out then. One of the participants shared that the first person he came out to was a supportive friend in middle school (Espitia, 2007). Other participants decided to disclose their sexual orientation to their friends between the ages of 20-24. Literature has proven the importance of having friends who identify within the queer community, as they are known to receive more help from people who identify similarly (e.g. Anderson, 1998; Coronado, 2009; Espitia, 2007; Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002).

2.7.2 Educational Contexts

Despite the scarcity of safe spaces for the queer community throughout college campuses, colleges offer unique opportunities for queer males to be more open about their sexuality (Camacho, 2016; Rhoads, 1997). According to Rhoads (1997), college offers students a

chance to be independent from their parents, who are known to play negative roles in queer students' lives (e.g. Abalos, 2002; Angelo, 2005; Camacho, 2016; Coronado, 2009; Espitia, 2007; Ocampo, 2014; Patrón, 2016), the opportunity to join supportive networks of people who may identify in a similar manner, and an overall sense of freedom. In a study examining how Latina/o students negotiated their sexual and ethnic/racial identities, Peña-Talamantes (2013a) found that collegial spaces provided students with a sense of freedom. Furthermore, students expressed a sense of security that was fostered through the self, the people who surrounded them, and the college environment (Peña-Talamantes, 2013a).

Other students find support by joining or creating groups on campus that serve as safe spaces and that allow them to educate the larger student body on queer issues (Camacho, 2016; Patrón & G.A. Garcia, 2016). Although Rhoads (1997) found that participants in his study avoided interacting with fraternity members due to homophobia, Camacho (2016) found that Greek life provided gay Latinos with a safe space, making students' experiences with fraternities vary by context. Camacho's (2016) study examining the barriers and successes of 10 gay Latino men in college revealed that involvement with student organizations, both queer and Latina/o focused, exposure to certain classes (e.g. Latina/o Studies), and involvement with fraternities increased their levels of self-acceptance and provided them with support in the coming out process. By joining a fraternity, students learned how to get scholarships, network, and were pushed to join other organizations on campus (Camacho, 2016). Some students felt that if it was not for their fraternity and the support they received from their frat brothers they would have felt isolated (Camacho, 2016). Additionally, they found advocates for the queer community among their fraternity brothers.

Still for others, the academic environment provided opportunities for them to further understand the intersection of their gay and Latino identities (Camacho, 2016). Camacho (2016) mentioned that participants in his study frequently shared how their academic environments influenced their racial/ethnic identities, particularly when taking Latina/o Studies courses or those were Latina/o scholars, such as Gloria Anzaldua, were included in the syllabus. Taking classes that allowed Latinos to relate with the course content provided them with the tools to understand the complexities of being Latino (Camacho, 2016). Furthermore, Evans and Broido (1999) found that being surrounded by supportive people and having queer role models proved to be encouraging for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students.

2.8 Chapter Summary

Conceptually, resilience has undergone several changes and iterations since the 1970's. While the main ideology—successfully overcoming adversity—has remained as the core interpretation, there has been much debate on whether it is a personality trait or not (Luthar et al., 2000; Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). Due to the lack of consensus, there have been researchers like Shaikh and Kauppi (2010) and Luthar et al. (2000) that have provided an overview of the multiple resilience phenomena. Shaikh and Kauppi (2010) developed two overarching clusters, psychology and social work/sociology, with various strands under each of them to demonstrate complexities with the term. In this review, I organized different resilience interpretations into separate clusters: psychology, sociology, and education. I also discussed differences between the term resilience, which connotes a process, and resiliency, which refers to a personality trait. I then highlighted different ways in which resilience has been measured by focusing on

quantitative and qualitative methods. Finally I discussed some of the most prominent critiques on the use and conceptualization of resilience.

After accounting for resilience as a conceptual framework, I reviewed literature on gay Latino males by specifically focusing on risk and protective factors. I divided risks into contextual risk factors and those based on social identities. The former included familial, educational, and religious and cultural contexts while race and sexuality were discussed under the social identities section. Contextual protective factors included family and friends as well as involvement with co-curricular organizations and the academic environment. As viewed, risks far outweighed protective factors.

It is important to note that the same contexts and social identities discussed within risk and protective factors can serve two different purposes; a positive one and a negative one. Latina/o familial contexts, for example, can play a damaging role by expecting Latino men to be heterosexual and to engage in masculine like activities. When Latino men fail to fulfill the archetypical male role they are reprimanded and, often times, disowned by their families. Latina/o families, however, can also be instrumental in the coming out process or in providing unconditional support throughout gay Latino men's lives. Moreover, the aforementioned social identities and contexts are discussed in relation to risk and protective factors throughout this study, shifting the conversation around what constitutes as such. Social identities that are connected to larger systems of oppression, such as race, gender, and sexuality, have been largely excluded from discussions on risks, protective factors, and an overall process of resilience, allowing me to bring all three components to a redefined conceptualization of resilience, as I began to do in this chapter.

3.0 Methodology

In order to learn about the life experiences and resilience of gay Latino males in college, I used narrative as the guiding methodology, grounded in the work of Atkinson (1995) and Polkinghorne (1988), while simultaneously drawing from other scholars who have influenced the development and utilization of stories as a method and analytic approach (e.g. Bruner, 1991; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Reissman, 2008; Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2008; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Because I explored the ways that sexuality, race/ethnicity, social economic status, and gender, among other socially constructed identities, influenced the lived experiences of resilient gay Latinos, narrative allowed me to further understand the life stories that were significant to the participants (Atkinson, 1995; Hayden, 2008; Polkinghorne, 1988).

Narrative was appropriate for my study because it “attempts to capture the ‘whole story,’ whereas other methods tend to communicate understandings of studied subjects or phenomena at certain points, but frequently omit the importance of ‘intervening’ stages” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 4). In understanding resilience as a process, it was essential that I accounted for the participants’ life experiences, including those growing up through adulthood. By focusing on the whole story, I was able to make connections between multiple life events while demonstrating the functioning of resilience as an ongoing process that is influenced by numerous life experiences, contexts, and influential people, among other things.

In this study, I utilized narrative inquiry as a method and analytic approach to address the stated research questions. Due to the heavy emphasis on experience within narrative, I first discuss Dewey’s influence, as it relates to his work on experience. Dewey’s influence provides a

foundation for understanding the functioning of narrative work. Next, I discuss the various forms of data collection as well as procedures for participant recruitment that I employed. I particularly engaged in two overarching types of data collection, including semi-structured interviews and visual materials. I then move on to outline the step-by-step process I took in thematically analyzing the data. The final section provides a discussion on some of the limitations using narrative, my positionality, and validity of the research. It is important to note that while the term, “narrative inquiry” was proposed by Connelly and Clandinin (1990), it is often used interchangeably with the term, “narrative,” as I do here.

3.1 Research Questions

This investigation was primarily concerned with understanding the ways that gay Latino men in college underwent a process of resilience. In understanding such a process, I was interested in analyzing the ways that their most salient social identities contributed to their resilience. Although the interview protocol allowed participants to share their stories broadly, I inquired about race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, social economic status, and citizenship status. In fact, students were asked to rank the importance of their identities on a demographic form (see Appendix D) prior to the interview process. In order to holistically account for the linkages between events and experiences across the participant’s lifetime, narratives served as the main source of data collection. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, I collected life stories, which allowed me to have a holistic account of their respective processes of resilience. The three questions that guided this research were the following:

1. In what ways do gay Latino males undergo a process of resilience? ^[1]_[SEP]

2. How do gay Latino males' social identities (race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, social economic status, and citizenship status) influence their resilience?
3. What are the vulnerabilities and protective factors that are pertinent to the lives of gay Latinos?

3.2 Methodological/ Analytic Approach

Broadly speaking, narrative is used to refer to any spoken or written presentation. Narratives are used on a daily basis as a central form of communication. Specifically, narrative can refer to “the process of making a story, to the cognitive scheme of the story, or to the result of the process—also called ‘stories,’ ‘tales,’ or ‘histories’” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 13). Like Polkinghorne (1988), I use narrative to refer to both the process and the results. Narrative therefore is considered the “fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 13). It is through the interconnection of multiple events and life experiences that a holistic understanding of a person's life can be achieved.

At the same time, narratives are valuable in that they help organize those very same events and experiences into a whole, which assists in understanding them in conjunction as part of a larger phenomenon instead of in isolated individualities. While it is important and necessary to understand stories for what they are, even if it means scrutinizing them on an individual basis, I was interested in the intertwinement of multiple life events and experiences, as it allowed me to account for participants' experiences in a holistic manner. I sought to understand how participants' social identities connected to vulnerabilities and protective factors and how those

experiences connected or disconnected from one another in understanding their resilience. This process within narrative operates by paying close attention to diverse happenings along a continuum and then identifying the effects that they each have on one another (Atkinson, 1995; Polkinghore, 1988). Since narrative has the potential to provide a thorough account of actions throughout an entire lifetime, it ensured that I covered significant events at different stages of the participants' lives.

In choosing the most appropriate type of stories for this investigation, I specifically engaged in life stories. According to Atkinson (1995), life stories are those that “a person chooses to tell about the life they have lived, what they remember of it, and what they want others to know of it” (p.xiv). Life stories are considered the essence of what has happened in someone's life, as they cover experiences from birth or before to the present and beyond. Included in life stories are events significant to the person telling them, meaningful or influential experiences, and feelings, which can be a direct outcome of particular experiences. Since my interview protocol was intentionally designed to inquire about adversity related to participants' social identities, the stories covered such topics. By inviting participants to share their stories, they were able to express their truths, as understood by them (Atkinson, 1995).

According to Atkinson (1995), the act of storytelling is important at the individual and collective levels. For one, self-reflection and introspection help put events, experiences, and feelings in order. By putting them in order, the sharer understands them with more clarity and also becomes more inclined to share them with other people with hopes that it can help them. By engaging in the process of storytelling, peoples' experiences are enhanced and given greater meaning. In sharing stories “we find that we have a lot more in common with others than we might have thought. This sharing of stories creates a bond between people who may not even

have known each other before” (Atkinson, 1995, p. 15). As such, people begin to make connections with one another, validating their experiences even if there has been no encounter between them. At the personal level, sharing stories can help people clarify their sense of identity, as they can develop a stronger sense of self. Moreover, talking about a particular experience can help people rid themselves of certain burdens, which are not always clear to people until they have been shared (Atkinson, 1995). For gay Latinos, literature has shown that they often feel as if they are a burden to their families due to their sexualities, further illustrating the importance of narrative and the opportunities for them to share their stories.

3.2.1 Dewey’s Influence on Narrative Inquiry

Literature on narrative inquiry has been greatly influenced by the works of educator and philosopher John Dewey, particularly in relation to experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Dewey, 1990). According to Clandinin and Caine (2008) “Dewey’s theory of experience is most often cited as the philosophical underpinning of narrative inquiry” (p.542). While Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss the numerous times that their research interests have changed within narrative, they also note that the one thing that remains the same is the influence of Dewey’s writings on the nature of their work. Dewey’s (1990) understanding of experience was inclusive of both personal and social matters, therefore allowing Clandinin and Connelly (2000) to use the term in an inquiry form that follows a specific method of analysis. Dewey (1990) argued that it is imperative to provide students with experiences that lead to learning, as opposed to a regimented structure of education. Furthermore, the personal and social are inextricably linked at all points in time for Dewey (1990), creating a more complex understanding of experience.

Because people function within different contexts, one cannot remove one's self from the other. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), "the term experience helps us think through such matters as an individual child's learning while also understanding that learning takes place with other children, with a teacher, in a classroom, in a community, and so on" (p. 2). It is important to note that although Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to children in the previous example, the same thing can be applied to people in different age groups, including college students, as I do here. At the same time, experience can be talked about in different contexts, such as the home, the streets, and other neighborhood settings. For this study, I focused on contexts that were important to the participants, including the home, school, and queer spaces. Furthermore, Dewey sustained that experiences happen on a continuum, and experiences always lead to more experiences (as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Consequently, it was important to pay close attention to any patterns or ways in which they were connected to one another, especially as I moved into analyzing the data.

3.2.2 Narrative in This Study

In answering the research questions, this investigation engaged in a narrative design, particularly that of life stories. Polkinghorne (1988) argues that narrative is best understood as a scheme in which "human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions" (p. 11). It is a framework that helps understand past events and plan future actions while giving them meaning. Furthermore, narrative helps situate experiences within personal and cultural realms that together can help understand a larger phenomenon. In this study, resilience was at the epicenter of the investigation, with the participants' experiences and stories demonstrating the functioning of resilience as an ongoing process influenced by a range of

factors—from their social identities to contextual elements. Narratives are important because they “reflect a narrator’s unique personal concerns but never in isolation from interpersonal and sociocultural contexts” (Baddeley & Singer, 2007, p. 198). Similarly, contexts are significant in that they have a direct influence in the types of experiences people have (Kramp, 2007; Webster & Mertova, 2007). The role and influence of culture through one’s upbringing is of special importance in making sense of contexts, particularly in relation to one’s social interactions; “because we and our stories are embedded in a social matrix, we are motivated to develop our stories in coherent forms that are understandable to ourselves and can be understood by others in our culture” (Baddeley & Singer, 2007, p. 198).

In collecting narratives, I was interested in those at the individual and cultural levels (Polkinghorne, 1988). At the individual level, I sought to capture the narratives participants had of their own lives. In sharing such stories, they were provided with the autonomy to define their past, their current identities, and their futures. At the cultural level, narratives are important in giving cohesion to shared beliefs (Polkinghorne, 1988). Since I was interested in learning how students’ experiences growing up influenced their experiences as adolescents, particularly in relation to different types of adversity, life narratives were instrumental in the process. In engaging in a narrative framework, this study particularly made use of narrative schemes, which are “schemes that display purpose and direction in human affairs and makes individual human lives comprehensible as wholes” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 18). Narrative schemes help connect people to events in an attempt to create cohesive stories in a sequential manner. In the organizing of events, narrative schemes also seek to identify the whole or main story to which life events and experiences are a part of. This process pays special attention to particular actions as they relate to a larger phenomenon, which in this case was a process of resilience.

In the organizational scheme of stories, I specifically made note of plots, which are understood as “the organizing theme that identifies the significance and the role of the individual events” (Polkinghorne 1988 p. 18). Plots were an imperative component of the stories that I collected, as they function to provide a schematic whole that moves beyond a chronicle of events and instead focuses on highlighting the contributions that certain events make to one another and to the development of a larger narrative. It is through the utilization of plots that researchers are able to understand and weave together a convoluted set of experiences that may not always make sense on their own. According to Polkinghorne (1988), “without the recognition of significance given by the plot, each event would appear as discontinuous and separate, and its meaning would be limited to its categorical identification or its spatiotemporal location” (p. 19). Plots, however, are not merely interested in the interconnection of events. Instead, they also account for the historical and contextual elements that are pertinent to the particular story that is being shared.

3.3 Data Collection

I employed three forms of data collection, including in-depth, semi-structured interviews, student participation on a private and closed social media page, and the collection of photographs taken by participants on their campus, particularly of different contexts that helped foster their resilience. In addition, all participants completed a demographic form, which asked them a series of basic open-ended questions as well as to rank the importance of their identities. The form was used to ask students about the meaning and importance of the identities, among other things. Only data from the interviews, the social media page, and the demographic form were included in the findings.

3.3.1 Interviews

During the first phase of data collection, students participated in a semi-structured interview. According to Tong, Sainsbury, and Craig (2007), “in depth and semi structured interviews explore the experiences of participants and the meanings they attribute to them,” (p. 351) often through the use of open-ended questions. In following a narrative framework, the first interview (see Appendix A) broadly inquired about the students’ life story, asking them to start with elementary school and bringing it up to the present. By opening up the interview process in such manner, participants had the agency to share memories, experiences, and events that were formative and meaningful to them. I asked them to think and consider things that they may not have spent time reflecting on in the past. Because life stories are interested in peoples’ experiences at different stages of their lives, participants were asked to discuss several of those stages (e.g. elementary school, middle school, high school, college, future). Additionally, they were asked about their resilience generally. Due to the nature of semi-structured interviews, participants were also asked to talk about their social identities when appropriate.

Thirty of the 50 participants were asked to participate in a second interview (see Appendix B), bringing the total to 80 one-on-one interviews over the course of the data collection period. The second interview was conducted for elaboration and clarification purposes. It was also then that participants were more specifically asked about risk and protective factors, the intersection of different social identities (e.g. race, sexuality, gender, race, religion etc.), and the influence these identities have on their resilience. Since inside and outside of school experiences are inextricably linked for gay Latino men, it was important to study them in conjunction (Patrón & G.A.Garcia, 2016; Peña-Talamantes, 2013). By focusing on the whole story, I was able to make connections between multiple life events while demonstrating the

functioning of resilience as an ongoing process that is influenced by numerous life experiences, contexts, and influential people.

I also asked participants to share stories about the adversity they faced throughout their lives as a result of those very same social identities. Because I was interested in the process of resilience that they underwent, the importance of contexts and people were also a part of their narratives. Throughout the interview process, I primarily served in the role of listener and provided guidance, support, and encouragement to the participants when needed (Atkinson, 1995). I provided direction when necessary to ensure that students felt safe. I also made it clear that they did not have to answer every question or share specific experiences that they were not comfortable with. Although the questions were framed in relation to resilience, the semi structured format allowed me to “respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). This is precisely how some of the themes presented in the following chapters emerged.

Overall, the length of the interviews varied by participant, as some had a lot more to say than others. Interviews ranged between 50 minutes to 192 minutes in length. There were only six out of eighty interviews that lasted under 60 minutes while there was one interview that lasted 262 minutes. The interview that lasted the longest (262 minutes) was because the participant reached back out to me after the second interview to express that he had more things he wanted to share and that he felt were relevant to the questions we covered in the second interview. Given the participants’ location and comfort level, interviews were conducted in person and via video chat. There was only one interview conducted via a voice phone call.

3.3.2 Visual Materials

Additional forms of data collection derived from an online, private and closed social media page and from the collection of photographs taken by participants, both fitting within the visual materials type of data collection (Creswell, 2014). Both types of data collection served several functions for students in the telling of stories. Although the private social media page primarily allowed participants to identify with and validate each other's experiences, I also used the posts as data. It is easy for people to feel reluctant, intimidated, uncomfortable, or embarrassed (Atkinson, 1995) about particular things, especially when discussing sensitive topics, such as sexuality, gender, racism, homophobia, etc. To help counter such effects, this page served as an outlet that empowered participants by providing them with the autonomy to speak freely about their life experiences. Secondly, the page provided students with a safe space to share resources with one another while providing support to each other's educational and overall life experiences. This page let students know that they were not alone but that there were others who have undergone similar experiences and who care about the things they have to say. Participants were added to the group after the first interview.

Furthermore, participants were encouraged to interact with one another by providing support to posts through different push features and comments on posts. Atkinson (1995) outlines some of the benefits to sharing stories, which I understand as being helpful under a number of contexts, including an online web page. The benefits include, (1) "Sharing our story is a way of purging, or releasing, our selves of certain burdens and validating our own experience; it is in fact central to the recovery process" and (2) "Sharing our story helps connect us to the greater human community we are a part of, and may show us that we have more in common with others than we thought. In transmitting our personal truth, we also validate the collective truth

we all share” (Atkinson, 1995, p. 117). To set the tone of the page, my first announcement made it clear that the page was created for the participants in this study. I asked students to treat one another with respect, even if they disagreed on any matters. Overall, there were no issues reported regarding the page. On the contrary, participants expressed their liking for the group. After a slow start, the page turned into a rich and interactive space where participants posed questions, opportunities for involvement, scholarships, and other resources for their peers. In responding to specific questions, participants engaged in conversations among themselves.

Participants were also asked to take 2-3 pictures of campus spaces that they felt represented or contributed to their process of resilience. In doing so, students were given the opportunity to share the realities of their racialized, gendered, queered bodies, as understood by them. The pictures were used as a tool for conversation on the importance of contexts in their resilience. Images are defined in a broad sense and include those that are found in a particular place along with those that have been taken in the past and present time (Riessman, 2008). Images are used to express an idea or emotion and to imagine alternatives (Helmets, 2006; Reavey, 2011). According to Riessman (2008), “several investigators tell a story *with* images, others tell a story *about* images that themselves tell a story” (p. 141). Still, in other cases, images are used by both researchers and participants to collaboratively tell a story and make meaning through the selected images (Harper, 1998; Riessman, 2008). Here, I only used photographs that participants took on their campus during the undertaking of the study. I did not include pictures taken in the past. To be clear, pictures were not used in the analysis of the findings that are presented here.

3.4 Student Sample

Creswell (2013) suggests that the researcher identifies individuals who are “accessible, willing to provide information, and distinctive for their accomplishments and ordinariness or who shed light on a specific phenomenon or issue being explored” (p. 146). As such, only gay Latinos in college were included. Aligned with my conceptualization of resilience, I entered the study understanding that as students who possess minoritized identities, gay Latinos were resilient, especially when accounting for the manner in which their social identities are connected to systems of oppression (Goodman, 2001; Patrón & G.A. Garcia, 2016; Weber, 1998), including racism, homophobia, heterosexism, patriarchy, and white supremacy.

The sample of participants included 50 students from different colleges and universities across the United States, including 2-year and 4-year institutions, both public and private (see Appendix E for list of participants). Given the large number of Latinos in the West Coast, a majority of participants came from Southern California. It is important to note that 26 of the 50 participants were undergraduate students, including five that were enrolled at 2-year colleges. The remaining 24 students were graduate students. Because I argue that resilience occurs over an indefinite period of time and is not tied to a particular age or stage in life, I wanted to capture the resilience for both groups of students. Since college years are known to offer students a chance to be independent and develop many of their identities (Rhoads, 1997; Stevens, 2004), including those discussed here, it was appropriate to include both groups.

Students’ majors varied from engineering to media and cultural studies, with several of them indicating a second major or a minor. Their class standing also varied from first year student at a community college to third year in graduate school. In the same thread, a majority of them (33) indicated being a first generation college student. An additional student said he was

first generation through his biological family but not through his family. He is not included in the 33 students. Since participants were asked to rank the importance of their identities, a majority of them (27) ranked their racial/ethnic identity as the most important one, followed by social economic status (10), and sexual orientation (8). There were several of them that ranked more than one identity as their number one while others chose “other” and included things like personality, college grad, lifestyle. Although the call for participants used the word Latino and therefore the participants are referred to as such, there were students who identified as Hispanic, Central American, Mexican American, Latinx, Chicanx, African Peruvian, Latino/white, and mixed-race Latino, among others. While participants were able to choose their own pseudonyms, some of them asked me to choose one for them. It is important to note that there were four students who did not submit their demographic form.

3.4.1 Participant Recruitment

To help identify participants for this investigation, I borrowed from Arcury and Quandt’s (1999) five-step general site-based procedure while drawing from other more innovative ways of recruiting participants. According to Arcury and Quandt (1999), the first step is to specify the characteristics that are relevant to the sampling, which should reflect the goals of the research. By focusing in on a set of characteristics, the researcher ensures that there is boundaries set for the sample. Important things to consider include demographic characteristics and sociocultural factors. For this study, I focused on gay Latino men in their undergraduate and graduate years. As such, I engaged in purposeful sampling, which refers to the researcher selecting “individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research

problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 157). At the same time, I used snowball sampling to facilitate the recruiting process (Creswell, 2013).

In qualitative research, the purpose is to identify people who possess characteristics that are relevant to the phenomenon being studied because they will “enable exploration of a particular aspect of behavior relevant to the research” (Mays & Pope, 1995, p.110). Consequently, this study only worked with gay Latino men who were enrolled in a college or university. The second step is to make a list of potential sites from which participants will be recruited. Sites that are selected are used to “maximize the coverage in terms of characteristics important to the study” (Acrury & Quandt, 1999, p. 129) and are meant to include a sufficient number of people that can be recruited for participation. Given my geographic location (Los Angeles) at the time of data collection and that there are many Latinos who live throughout the state of California, it made sense that I recruited participants from nearby areas.

One of the ways in which participants were recruited included the hosting of a one day summit for gay Latino males. In the Spring semester of 2018, I co-created and co-hosted the *Summit for Gay Latino Male Collegians* with Dr. Shaun Harper at the University of Southern California campus. Throughout the event, participants engaged in a series of activities related to their multiple identities within higher education contexts. Towards the end of the summit, I discussed my research project and students who were interested in participating were able to sign up for the study. There were 12 students who signed up after the event. Summit attendees also shared the opportunity to participate in the study with their networks.

An additional form of recruitment included a flyer (see Appendix C) that was disseminated via different social media applications. Specifically, I posted the flyer on my Facebook account and asked my friends list, which includes faculty, graduate students, and

administrators, to share with their networks. In this manner, my post was re-shared over 50 times via Facebook. Additionally, the flyer was also shared via Twitter. The flyer included a description of the study along with a link for interested students to directly sign up. The sign up form simply asked students for their name, school, class standing, and major. The link also included a more extensive description of the study and my contact information in case interested students had any questions. The utilization of the flyer was an intentional and strategic decision. Because I understand that some gay Latinos are not out of the closet while others may only be out to certain people, I wanted to be mindful and respectful of that. The flyer allowed students to sign up on their own accord without having to share or verbalize their interest to anyone if they did not want to. In the end, 35 of the participants signed up for the study via the online form.

The third step in the process is to estimate the number of potential participants (Acrury & Quandt, 1999). Once that has been accomplished, the researcher needs to identify gatekeepers at the selected sites. Gatekeepers are individuals at the chosen sites that can provide access to the site and that determine whether the research can be conducted there or not (Cresswell, 2014). They are an essential part of the recruitment process, as they can ease access to the site and can likely help identify participants. Given the aforementioned forms of recruitment, I did not have to work with gatekeepers directly. The fourth step in the process is to actually recruit participants. Once interested students signed up for the study via the online form, I followed up with them via email, answered questions they had, and scheduled the first interview. The final step in the procedure was accomplished when all participants were recruited (Acrury & Quandt, 1999). The online form generated a table with the information that I asked students to complete, allowing me to keep track of the participants, interviews completed etc. as I conducted the interviews.

3.4.2 Pilot Study

Conducting a pilot study is a common procedure that is used to not only test the quality of an interview protocol but also for identifying researcher biases (Chenail, 2011; Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). Pilot studies are important because they “might give advance warning about where the main research project could fail, where research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated” (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001, p. 33). Prior to conducting this study, I collaborated on a similar investigation where my advisor and co-author and I conceptualized resilience as a process (Patrón & Garcia, 2016). The study was a secondary data analysis that was based on data collected for a project on Latino male leadership, including 24 participants. The initial study was a multisite investigation including two 4-year public institutions and two 4-year private institutions. Although the project was a mixed methods study, we only used the qualitative data for the pilot study and only focused on resilient students.

In identifying students as resilient, there was a four point criterion that was developed, “(1) had overcome at least one form of adversity identified in the literature as a potential barrier to academic success; (2) were enrolled in a selective college, indicating they successfully overcame the adversity faced; (3) were on track to graduating when we interviewed them; and (4) demonstrated resilience as a process throughout their lives” (p. 530). There were a total of seven Latino males identified as resilient, with their majors varying from engineering to Chicana/o Studies. The findings revealed four major themes “(1) disparate challenges based on social identities, (2) contentious peer contexts, (3) social identities as motivation, and (4) contexts of opportunity” (p. 532). I used the pilot study as a basis to formulate new research questions for this study, to develop the interview protocol, and to help in my conceptualizing of

resilience. It is important to note that there were notable differences between the two studies. For one, this investigation solely focused on gay Latino men, altering the topics and stories shared by participants. Additionally, the interview protocol was intentional in asking questions related to adversity and the participants' social identities.

3.5 Analysis

Narrative analysis moves from the data that has been collected into the structuring of stories that connect the narratives with other contextual elements that were significant in the participants' lives (e.g. Bruner, 1991; Kramp, 2007). Reissman (2008) defines it as “a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form” (p. 11). Narrative analysis allows the researcher and person sharing the story to organize and analyze the story by “linking events, perceptions, and experiences” (Kramp, 2007, p. 107). In engaging in narrative analysis, there are a number of approaches to making sense of the data that has been collected (Phoenix, 2008; Riessman, 2001). Reissman (2008) outlined a typology consisting of four main analytic approaches: thematic, structural, dialogic-performative, and visual narrative analysis. Choosing the method of analysis needs to be intentional, as each form gets at different things and conveys the stories in different manners. This study engaged in a thematic analysis of the interview and social media page data.

3.5.1 Thematic Analysis

Although thematic analysis is poorly demarcated, it is a widely-used method of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Riessman, 2008). It primarily involves a cross-examination of what the given story is about (Reissman, 2008). According to Willig (2014), thematic analysis refers to “the process of identifying themes in the data which capture meaning that is relevant to the research question” (p. 147). It helps organize the data in a detailed manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Tuckett, 2005) while allowing “scholars, observers, or practitioners to use a wide variety of types of information in a systematic manner that increases their accuracy or sensitivity in understanding and interpreting observations about people events, situations and organizations” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 5). Through themes researchers are able to make connections between the data as well as find patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Willig, 2014). Despite the lack of a fixed order to analyzing data, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that the process starts when the researcher begins to notice patterns of meaning. The following is a discussion of the various phases I engaged in to analyze the data, particularly drawing from Boyatzis (1998) and Braun and Clarke (2006).

3.5.1.1 Thematic Analysis’ Phases

The initial phase for analyzing data begins with the researcher becoming familiar with the data to the fullest extent. To do so, researchers must read through the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006), especially if they were not a part of the data collection process. It is advised that the researcher takes notes throughout, as they will be used in later stages. Accordingly, I audio recorded all of the interviews and had them professionally transcribed. To begin, I read all of the interviews without making note of anything. I simply wanted to immerse myself in the data and

become even more familiar with the participants' stories. I then re-read all of the transcripts and began to make note of codes and ideas, aligning with the next phase of analysis. In the second stage, the researcher needs to have the ability to sense a codable moment (Boyatzis, 1998). It is in this manner that themes begin to emerge. In order to get there, however, there needs to be a set of codes first, as codes help inform and formulate a list of potential themes. These codes are usually a result of things that appear interesting to the researcher and that are connected to the larger topic of the given study. It is important to note that codes are different than themes; they tend to be smaller and more specific to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Since I was interested in discussing particular types of vulnerabilities and protective factors related to the participants' social identities, I was open to codes and ideas that emerged from the questions in the interview protocol. However, precisely because I knew that I wanted to reveal a different set of vulnerabilities, I also focused on codes that were particularly related to the six social identities discussed here. As such, I engaged in both inductive and deductive coding (Merriam, 2009). Since I wrote analytic memos (Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2013) for each of the interviews, I also revisited those during the coding phases. These memos were related to resilience, social identities, participants' behavior, and things to follow-up on. Memos were especially helpful as I prepared for the second interview.

The third stage is reached when there is a list of codes that has been defined. The codes are then sorted into potential themes with each of the codes categorized under each of them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) state that in this stage "you are starting to analyze your codes, and consider how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme" (p. 19). As this stage is undertaken, it is useful to organize the data using some sort of table or map to help the researcher visualize the data in its entirety. As such, once I developed a

solid list of codes on a word document, I defined each of them in order to have a level of consistency by the time I engaged in line-by-line coding. I then arranged the codes into categories (Saldaña, 2013), allowing me to place the already existing codes within larger categorical concepts. Codes were grouped together based on similarities to one another but always in relation to the larger concept that they were under. Once codes were grouped together, I deleted those that seemed duplicative.

Upon finalizing the codebook (Saldaña, 2013), I uploaded the transcripts and list of codes with definitions to NVivo, which is a qualitative data analysis software. Once everything was uploaded, I began coding the transcripts. On NVivo, I engaged in line by line coding by applying a code to specific sections of the transcript. Initially, I only coded some of the transcripts because I wanted to test the accuracy and completeness of the codebook. After this initial phase of coding, I made changes to the codebook. Specifically, I rearranged some codes by moving them from one category to another and I also added others. Once transcripts were coded, I was able to separate data through different filtering on the software. For instance, I was able to separate data based on codes that were specific to the research questions. I was also able to run single and double code queries. This then allowed me to develop a list of vulnerabilities and protective factors as potential themes based on analysis of the codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

By the start of the fourth phase, a list of potential themes has been outlined. Such themes are then analyzed in-depth to figure out whether there is enough data to support them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As I solidified the list of potential themes, I separated the codes that they were most aligned with on NVivo to ensure that there was enough data to support each of them. Because I knew that I was going to discuss vulnerabilities and protective factors, I divided my themes into those two overarching categories. At the same time, I individually separated codes

into the six identities discussed here, which made it easier for me to situate them within a resilience framework. By the fifth stage, I had a definite list of the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Due to the intersectionality of participants' identities and the prevalence of systems of oppression, there was a significant amount of overlap in the themes. According to Wertz, Charmaz, McMullen, Josselson, Anderson, and McSpadden (2011), the intertwining in themes is a sign of good work, as categories that are too separate from one another appear artificial.

3.6 Researcher Bias

According to Mehra (2002), the “notion of how one's self influences one's research interests is generally the beginning of our discussion on the issue of bias in research” (p. 5). It is almost impossible to be completely bias free in a research study, as researchers tend to investigate topics that are, in one way or another, important to them. Moreover, researchers choose particular methods and modes of analysis that they believe are most appropriate to the phenomenon under study. This, however, does not make a research study less rigorous or less credible, especially if there are guidelines that are followed and strategies that are implemented to decrease the level of bias. Due to cultural upbringings, contextual influences, life experiences, and one's identities, people gain interest in a range of areas of study, leading them to further inquire about things that they care about or feel connected to. Like Mehra (2002), I believe that

Qualitative research paradigm believes that researcher is an important part of the process.

The researcher can't separate himself or herself from the topic/people he or she is studying, it is in the interaction between the researcher and researched that the knowledge

is created. So the researcher bias enters into the picture even if the researcher tries to stay out of it (p. 9)

Creswell (2014) suggests that researchers identify their biases, values, and personal background that might have had an influence on the study at some point.

In order to account for biases in this study, there were a number of steps taken throughout the entirety of the process. For one, my positionality serves as a statement providing information on my stance within this research study (Creswell, 2014). Creswell also suggests that justifications be provided for the choosing of sampling strategies and modes of analysis, as I do here.

3.7 Positionality

Positionality is broadly understood as an individual's worldview or position that they have chosen or subscribed to in relation to a particular topic or research undertaking. According to Merriam, Johnson, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, and Muhamad (2001), positionality is “determined by where one stands in relation to ‘the other’” (p. 411), understanding that the positions can shift. Positions are known to alter as a result of things like race/ethnicity, education, gender, sexual orientation, and class, among other things. As such, I discuss two of my most salient identities related to the topic under study, situating them within Banks' (1998) typology of crosscultural researchers. The typology is based on the assumption that in a diverse society like the U.S. “individuals are socialized within ethnic, racial, and cultural communities in which they internalize localized values, perspectives, ways of knowing, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge that can differ in significant ways from those of individuals socialized within other

microcultures” (Banks, 1998, p. 7). The two identities I have chosen to discuss are 1) my identity as a Latino, particularly in relation to a Latina/o cultural upbringing, and 2) my identity as a cisgender heterosexual male. While the two identities are discussed separately, they are inextricably linked, making it imperative for the reader to understand the multiple ways in which they intersect and complement one another.

The first of my identities is one that heavily influenced my decision to conduct research with marginalized groups of people, particularly with Latinas/os and, in this case, gay Latinos. My racial/ethnic background has, in many ways, marked my educational trajectories, life experiences, and my position within the larger society. Consequently, I have become interested in doing research with people whom I can relate to at a racial/ethnic and cultural level. As a Latino, I possess an emic perspective on family dynamics within a Latina/o culture, which partially allowed me to understand some of the participants’ experiences with their families. Although I am well aware that Latinas/os are not a homogeneous group and therefore familial dynamics will vary by individual cases, there are general understandings in regards to sexuality (Guzman, 2006).

Using Bank’s (1998) typology, I situate this particular identity within the indigenous insider, which “endorses the unique values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her indigenous community and culture and is perceived by people within the community as a legitimate community member who can speak with authority about it” (p. 8). Having been born to Latina/o parents, been raised within a Latina/o community, and having attended schools (k-12) that were predominantly Latina/o has positioned me to have an in-depth understanding of cultural traditions, histories, the importance of language and immigration status, and everyday doings that are common within and across Latina/o families. I have been immersed within the

Latina/o culture the entirety of my life, making me an insider to the group. It is partially through my positionality within Latina/o culture that I have come to understand resilience in ways that diverge from its traditional conceptions. Having experienced, both direct and indirect, forms of adversity related to my racial/ethnic background, gender, language, and citizenship status have informed my desire to challenge things that have been deemed worthy of being discussed within a resilience framework.

Similarly, my identity as a cisgender heterosexual Latino male is one of importance for this investigation, as I am an automatic outsider to the life experiences of gay Latinos and the queer community at large. As a result, I understood this identity as that of an external outsider. Banks (1998) defines the external outsider as socialized within a different community than the one in which he or she is doing research with, “The external-outsider has a partial understanding of and little appreciation for the values, perspectives, and knowledge of the community he or she is studying and consequently often misunderstands and misinterprets the behaviors within the studied community” (p. 8). While I have been socialized outside of the gay community, I have a level of understanding in regards to familial dynamics for gay Latinos due to my indigenous insider position to the larger racial/ethnic group. I grew up surrounded by queer family members and friends both inside and outside of educational contexts. Although I was naïve about the functioning of intersectionality growing up, queerness was something that I was surrounded by and therefore aware of. My positionality as an indigenous insider to Latina/o culture provided me with a level of insight to the Latina/o queer community. Because the two identities are indissociable, I am a hybrid of the indigenous insider and external outsider positionalities.

Despite the salience of the aforementioned identities, I did my best to remain unbiased in collecting, analyzing, and writing up the data. I continually reflected on such identities and the

ways in which they possibly influenced the undertaking of the study. As a social justice advocate, I am committed to conducting rigorous work where my personal biases and identities tied to power are removed from the centrality of this work. Although it was impossible to rid myself of my dominant identities, I was especially reflective of the ways they manifested themselves throughout the various stages in the study.

As part of a dominant group (cisgender heterosexual male), I understood that there was a power relation at play (Merriam et al., 2001), as I engaged in research with a minoritized group. Merriam et al. (2001) note that although power-based dynamics are inherent in all research, power is something that all researchers should be aware of as well as negotiate in the research process. As such, there was an interactive relationship throughout the entirety of the study, with the participants being empowered through the sharing of their stories. Additionally, participants negotiated a level of power by deciding where and when to meet as well as the type and amount of information they chose to disclose. Participants were notified and reminded that they had the option to opt out at any point in the study or refrain from answering particular questions. Additionally, I made a concerted effort to refrain from engaging in language or behavior that exerted power related to my heterosexual identity. Being immersed in the literature and having extensive conversations with people in the queer community helped and prepared me to better navigate the interview and overall research process.

3.8 Validity of Research

Like any other research design, narrative is concerned with producing valid knowledge. According to Merriam (2009), “validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached

through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented" (p. 210).

Within narrative, validity refers to being well-grounded and supported (Polkinghorne, 1988). Unlike other methods that are used within the context of formal logic or measurement theory, which are concerned with following the rules of logic or understanding the relationship between a measuring instrument and a concept that is meant to be measured, narrative is "based on the more general understanding of validity as a well-grounded conclusion" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 175). To reach a level of validity, the researcher needs to provide sufficient evidence to support any conclusions that have been made. The evidence and arguments derived from the data do not necessarily serve to produce certainty but instead likelihood. As such, an argument is only considered valid when it has "the capacity to resist challenge or attack (Polkinghorne, 1988).

In order to attain a level of validity, I situate my investigation within the reformist social science community (Polkinghorne, 2007). According to Polkinghorne (2007), reformists understand that "there are important aspects of the personal and social realms that cannot be investigated within the limitations of what has been conventionally accepted as evidence and arguments used to justify or validate knowledge claims" (p. 472). Validating knowledge is an argumentative practice with the purpose of convincing others that the likeliness of the support of a particular argument is "strong enough that the claim can serve as a basis for understanding of and action in the human realm" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 476). In this study, I did not seek to make an argument beyond what is possible to conclude from the narratives that I collected, especially since qualitative research is not necessarily concerned with making generalizations (Creswell, 2013). Instead, I sought to report the participants' experiences and meanings attached to particular stories. Since I was invested in learning more about the processes of resilience that

gay Latino men underwent, I sought to hear and collect stories about the ways that the students' experiences helped them overcome various forms of adversity, particularly those related to their social identities and situated within systems of oppression.

Additionally, Merriam (2009) argues that what makes experimental studies trustworthy is a careful design of the study, which includes applying standards developed and accepted by the scientific community. In following Merriam's (2009) recommendation, I employed various forms of validity and reliability, such as triangulation of the data. According to Mays and Pope (1995), "triangulation refers to an approach to data collection in which evidence is deliberately sought from a wide range of different, independent sources and often by different means" (p. 110). Aside from interviews, I made use of a private and closed social media page where participants were asked to answer specific questions related to the topic of this study. On the page, participants had the opportunity to comment on each other's posts, show support to one another, and share resources. As the data was simultaneously collected, I used the interviews, online Facebook page, and pictures to compare how the data complemented one another. Member checks after the interviews were also utilized. Member checks included taking the data and bringing them back to the participants to make sure that they were accurate (Merriam, 2009).

Aside from my stated positionality, different forms of triangulation, and member checking, I also made use of thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which "refers to a description of the setting and participants of the study, as well as a detailed description of the findings with adequate evidence presented in the form of quotes from participant interviews, field notes, and documents" (Merriam, 2009, p. 227). In my analysis of the findings, I provided a methodical account of each of the participants at different stages of their lives when appropriate. When possible, I situated gay Latino men's life experiences within particular contexts to provide

a holistic account of their stories and resilience. These life experiences were discussed in relation to their multiple social identities and were connected to the larger research questions guiding this study. Moreover, I remained in close contact with various people for peer review/examination throughout the entirety of the investigation (Merriam, 2009). Different colleagues were helpful in providing critical feedback, asking challenging questions about the methodology, various forms of data collection, and the overall framing of the study. Prior to the implementation of this investigation, I received critical feedback from my dissertation committee and other colleagues on each of the chapters presented here.

3.9 Challenges and Limitations

Engaging in narrative work can be challenging to the researcher for multiple reasons. For one, it requires the investigator to collect extensive information about the participants (Creswell, 2013; Webster & Mertova, 2007). This can mean having to interview individuals multiple times or collecting various forms of data. In doing so, there may not necessarily be a set time frame in which the researcher is out on the field. Instead, recruitment strategies and the natural dynamics of the study determine the required time to complete the data collection process. At the same time, it is important that the researcher accounts for and understands the importance of the contexts in relation to the participants' lives. Creswell (2013) states that "it takes a keen eye to identify in the source material that gathers the particular stories to capture the individual's experiences" (p. 73). Following the data collection, "transcription and subsequent analysis by current qualitative tools tend to encourage a narrowing view of the data and do not allow the story to evolve or identify those events that are critical" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 114).

Such process can cause the researcher to dig himself/herself in a hole instead of engaging in a broadening approach. Furthermore, Clandinin and Caine (2008) mention that challenges move beyond privacy and informed consent, especially when working with marginalized groups of people in cross-cultural settings. Among those challenges are addressing the ways that participating in a narrative process shapes the participants lives along with the representation of their experiences.

Doing narrative work also raises concerns regarding ownership. Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) discuss issues related to authorship, ownership, and voice, asking the following questions, “Who speaks for whom and with what authority? Whose story is it? Who owns the products of the work? Who is the author? What are the purposes of life-history taking? What does the researcher gain from the research? The subject?” (p. 119). According to Hatch and Wisniewski, these are some of the questions that are often asked when it comes to understanding and establishing relationships between researchers and participants. To be clear, my intention is not to speak for the participants or claim their stories and experiences as mine. Instead, I am simply making sense of the stories they shared with me in an attempt to demonstrate what resilience can look like when accounting for social identities and systems of oppression that have consistently been overlooked in resilience literature.

While researchers may be well intentioned in doing a particular type of research, it is important to be aware of potential negative emotions that may arise for participants throughout the study (Chase, 2011; Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). Due to the nature of the narrative process, participants are subject to feeling vulnerable or exposed at some point during the interview (Chase, 2011). Consequently, time designated for reflection may be an imperative component in the interviewing process. Because of the topics that were covered in the data collection phases,

especially in the interviews, there were times that participants felt vulnerable. In such instances, I let the participants know that they could take the time they needed, that I was there to listen and validate what they had to say, and that they had the option to move on to the next question or simply end the conversation then.

Additional limitations regarding narrative inquiry include “questions about the validity of the narratives told by participants, including the question of whether or not they represent memory reconstruction versus ‘facts’” (Hunter, 2010, p. 44). Hunter (2010), however, goes on to mention that all stories are dependent on the context of the interviewer and interviewee and are not intended to be truth. In the same line of thought, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) warn about falsehood being substituted for meaning, as it can lead the researcher to write fiction. Moreover, Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) note that an issue for narrative stems from making a judgment on the quality of the work, noting that criteria used to judge other research approaches may not necessarily fit with the use of narrative.

3.10 Chapter Summary

Although narrative research originated from literature, history, anthropology, sociology, and, sociolinguistics, among other disciplines, different fields of study have adopted their own ways of understanding it and engaging in narrative work. (Chase, 2005, as cited in Creswell, 2013). According to Riessman and Speedy (2007), “narrative study is now cross-disciplinary, not fitting within the boundaries of any single scholarly field” (p. 427). In fact, the interpretation and utilization of narrative is still evolving (Chase, 2011). Despite its lack of centrality within one specific discipline, narrative is used in educational research to tell stories, since “humans are

storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Narrative in education is needed to question and understand the complexities that are associated with people’s respective educational experiences, moving from conventional writing practices, which have undermined the human experience (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Furthermore, Clandinin and Connelly (1998) advocate for the use of narrative in educational research because it provides researchers with the tools to understand human experience, a key aspect in research.

The use of stories in discussing peoples’ life experiences has become the basis of narrative as a research method. In this study, I situated the use of narrative within the context of education. To better understand the functioning of resilience as a process for gay Latino men in college, this investigation made use of semi structured interviews with each of the participants. Additional forms of data collection included students’ participation in an online social media page and the collection of pictures. In analyzing the data, I engaged in a step by step thematic approach. Themes were important in capturing meaning as well as in making comparisons across participants’ experiences. Understanding that there are biases in this study and limitations in the use of narrative, I discussed my positionality within the broader study, particularly focusing on my racial/ethnic and heterosexual identities, the two that I consider most salient and significant to this investigation.

4.0 Vulnerabilities and Protective Factors for Gay Latino Men

In this study, I sought to challenge and expand the theoretical underpinnings of a resilience framework through the experiences of gay Latino male collegians. In doing so, it was important to account for vulnerabilities (or what the resilience literature calls, “risks”) and protective factors that were pertinent to the lives of the students in this investigation. Yet as seen in the four main waves of research on resilience discussed in chapter two, the framework has remained gender neutral, queer neutral, and race/ethnicity neutral, among other things. Here, I applied a critical perspective to better understand resilience, which revealed different forms of vulnerabilities and protective factors than those typically discussed in resilience literature; vulnerabilities related to the systemic structures that gay Latino men regularly navigate, and protective factors connected to various challenges. .

To illustrate the findings for this chapter, I drew data from across participants through semi-structured interviews and discussions via the private and closed social media page. Due to the intersectionality of students’ identities, some of their experiences overlap across themes. While some of the examples provided can be used to illustrate multiple themes, I chose to include them in the themes that I thought best encompassed the students’ experiences.

4.1 Vulnerabilities

Resilience literature has traditionally used the term risk factors to refer to environmental issues that place people in potential danger. The basis of a resilience construct asserts that in order for an individual to be considered resilient, their needs to be threats to their development (Masten, 2001). Risks, however, imply that there is something bad or wrong with the given risk. Because this study focuses on students' identities and the way they fit within a resilience framework, I decided to use the term vulnerability instead, as racial or sexual identities are not inherently risky. In discussing vulnerabilities, resilience has remained largely raceless, queerless, and genderless, among other things. Here, I present a different set of vulnerabilities that are pertinent to the lives of gay Latinos.

Guided by the following research question— what are the vulnerabilities that are pertinent to the lives of gay Latino males?— this section discusses the following four vulnerabilities as seen in the data: (1) notions of hierarchy among gay groups, (2) femmephobia in the queer community, (3) being a gay Latino in the era of Trump, and (4) racialized and homophobic incidents. In applying a critical perspective to understand resilience and determine what counts as such, I chose to highlight vulnerabilities that were connected to systems of oppression, including racism, heterosexism, and patriarchy.

4.1.1 Notions of Hierarchy Among Gay Groups

Contrary to popular beliefs and stereotypes about gay people being a homogeneous group, the gay community is a heterogeneous one with multiple cultures and subgroups (Maki, 2017). Subgroups (term used in the literature) are known to have varying experiences based on a

number of things— from stereotypes associated with each respective group to physical characteristics. Here I describe how participants experienced these gay groups, or what some referred to as, “gay tribes,” which are groups of men in the gay community that are ascribed a label (e.g. twink, bear, cub, otter, jock, daddy, etc.) based on physical traits, including those that are deemed worthy and those that are not. There were 27 participants that mentioned the existence of gay groups, with some of them talking more extensively about the role that they play. According to participants, the gay community is often categorized for its care and emphasis on physicality, meaning the way that people look and carry themselves. The emphasis on physical appearance has led to the development of a hierarchy, within a community that is already marginalized due to their sexuality. The hierarchy is based on the practice of labeling and the level of desirability that is attached to each of those labels. These labels have the ability to grant access and privileges to those that are viewed as belonging to groups at the top of the hierarchy, while denying them to and discriminating against those perceived as being at the bottom.

Many of the participants in this study were cognizant of the specific ways that gay groups affected the interactions and overall experiences they had within the gay community, especially in negative ways. Participants talked about gay groups and the influence they have on their individual experiences in a broad sense. There was not one specific context where they all experienced them. Instead, it was within the gay community broadly, which included the college campus, pride parade, and social media. It is critical to note that gay Latinos talked about these labels in relation to men in the gay community and not in reference to the queer community at large. In fact, participants’ descriptions of the labels were always in relation to other men. For example, in talking about the various groups, Mariano described them as, “So, there’d be like a

twink, which is a really skinny, younger guy, usually white. There's an otter, which is the thicker, hairy guy. Bear is, obviously, bigger, hairy guy. There's like jock which is like the sporty guy." These groups functioned in a formulaic manner, as physical appearance equated to the group that an individual belonged to, whether or not the individual self-subscribed to the given group.

Mariano went on to say that body image is a "huge thing" within the gay community, affecting not only the way that people think of themselves but, in turn, the way that such notions affect their physical presentation. For instance, Mariano shared how he was only viewed as skinny in the "straight world" while he was fat in the "gay world." Mariano continued, "To the gay people, because I don't have a six pack or I'm not super skinny like a twink, I'm already classified as not in shape, I'm fat. People will fat shame you constantly, even though I'm not fat." While Mariano did not think of himself as fat, he knew that the gay community perceived him differently.

In reflecting on the manifestation and utilization of the labels and the direct effects that they had on the way he chose to carry himself, Mariano expressed the complexities between self-perceptions and indirect messages ascribed to him based on the practice of labeling,

I try not to have them [affect self], but it's hard. It's hard when you're in a community, and it's constantly being thrown at you [body image issues]. I'm comfortable with my body and the way that I look. But like there's times when I'll question myself...the way my body looks.

For Mariano, such questioning was a result of the stigma attached to particular body types and the pressures to look certain ways and not on self-perceptions. Furthermore, for people who fell into the "normal person category," there was no group that they belonged to. When specifically

accounting for race among gay groups, Mariano felt that white gays were “definitely” at the top of the hierarchy, especially since “being gay has always been seen as a white thing” whereas he felt that people of color and especially trans women were on the opposite end of the hierarchy.

Consistent with Mariano’s belief that gay groups are defined in relation to white people’s conceptualizations broadly, Gustavo shared that such terminologies are utilized more so in white normative queer communities, rather than applied to queer communities of color, “the deployment of these terms have been lodged in my opinion as exclusionary with respect to dating white queer men (often they utilize it as a “filter”).” The filter was used to justify attractiveness. As someone who actively and intentionally looked for spaces with people of color, Gustavo expressed having little interaction with these labels. At the same time, however, Gustavo felt that the practice of labeling (e.g. twink, bears, cubs, etc.) within communities of color was a result of Black and Latino men dating white men. Here, one can see the influence that derived from normative practices used in white communities and the ways in which such practices infiltrate people of color spaces, thereby influencing the experiences for people of color.

Similarly, other students, such as Dave, recognized that gay groups played a detrimental role to the community, “I believe that these labels are very divisive. It’s used to describe... a particular body type while assigning some dichotomous set of expectations and behaviors to that particular tribe group.” The use of such labels pressured gay people to fulfill a particular set of behaviors and presentations that are reflective of the given group. Moreover, Dave thought about gay labels as an additional form of subjugation for a community that already struggles with things such as the coming out process, “overall, as LGBT people, we ‘come out of the closet’ to feel liberated... these labels just put us right into another confined state.” According to Dave,

being gay already comes with a set of challenges, particularly for those who may not be accepted by their kin, friends, or peers at school because of their sexuality. To exacerbate the issue, the utilization of gay labels only added a burden to the gay community.

The intersection between body image and the role of whiteness were also prevalent for Ezekiel. After attending a pride festival, Ezekiel was immediately reminded that there was a gay hierarchy. Due to the hierarchy, Ezekiel knew that there were places that he was not welcomed “based on the looks I would get from those around me. I was a bearded, bigger guy in a predominantly white and slim-figured space in bars advertised for ‘everyone.’” Although the bars were advertised as welcoming, he understood that the level of welcomeness was ultimately determined by physical appearance, including race.

In discussing the level of desirability that is attached to the different labels on a large scale, Ezekiel was clear about the additive role that the media played in delineating what was considered appealing and what was not, “a mainstream movie with model-like gay white men is the more socially appealing image rather than a dark-skinned Latino man with a dad bod.” Ezekiel was keenly aware of the intersection between race/ethnicity and body image and its relation to what was considered acceptable and enjoyable on television. He continued, “for example, “movies like ‘Love, Simon’ and ‘Alex Strangelove’ would not have gotten as much hype if their identities were more intersectionally marginalized with disenfranchised races and body types.” For Ezekiel, being on television was an exclusionary act privileging those that embody or most closely resemble what it means to be a gay white male, inadvertently marginalizing men of color.

Comparable to Ezekiel’s understanding of the role of the media, Francisco also considered and talked about the manner in which the media influenced the ways gay people are

supposed to act. Consequently, Francisco felt that he was prevented from being and presenting in the ways that he wanted. While working on campus, Francisco was confronted and questioned for not watching RuPaul's Drag Race, a television series where drag queens compete for America's Next Drag Superstar and a cash prize,

I was working with someone for a little bit who just made me feel really bad about not watching RuPaul's Drag Race. He was like, 'you can't — you're not even gay if you don't watch RuPaul's Drag Race...' Like people want to see you do certain things

Even though Francisco did not think of RuPaul's Drag Race as a good show, he was shunned for not watching it, to the point that he was labeled as not being gay. Francisco moved on to make a connection between the pressures to watch certain T.V. shows based on someone's sexuality to the pressures to look and behave in certain ways based on the group they belong to.

According to Francisco, the hierarchy was in relation to twink, the group he considered to be at the top of the hierarchy,

The most prized gays, I'd say, especially sexually, would be in the twink spectrum. You want to be hairless. You want to be skinny as a rod. You want to be as white as possible, those kind of things. That's the beauty standard in the gay community. You want to be as close to this twink.

Expectations were no different on his campus, as Francisco felt that gay males attempted to get as close as they possibly could to the top of the hierarchy. Related to desirability among gay groups, Francisco also discussed the importance of looking "innocent," which was tied to being white, "of course, that [innocence] has to do with whiteness. Sense of innocence is mainly available to those that are white" and "white passing." Hence, people of color were almost automatically removed from being desired in the gay community. Even though Francisco

acknowledged that behavior played a role in the designation of the groups people belong to, he ultimately felt that it was based on physical appearance. Therefore, the way that people talked and interacted with others mattered very little.

Inextricably linked with notions of hierarchy related to gay groups was the role of whiteness. When describing their perceptions and the influence of labeling, participants constantly referred back to the way whiteness informed their experiences. Mariano was clear about gayness equating to whiteness, thereby setting the standards of beauty, acceptability, and desirability within the hierarchy where white men were at the top. Similarly, Gustavo understood that the utilization of these labels were in respect to white men, particularly as a way of determining level of “attractiveness.” As a result, this theme is connected to racism and white supremacy. White supremacy is a systemic structure that institutionalizes racial dominance through social practices, policies, and economic exclusion of marginalized communities (Harris, 1993; Leonardo, 2002). Here, white supremacy is manifested through social practices based on principles related to and enacted by white people, as these groups were not created or given meaning by communities of color. Nonetheless, whiteness, in relation to gay groups, is based on the premise of exclusion, aligned with Harris’ notion of whiteness as property. Because the utilization of these labels is partially based on physicality and physicality leads to stratification, gay groups are inherently based on exclusionary acts rooted in white supremacy. Since white supremacy revolves around the idea of securing domination and the privileges that are associated with it (Leonardo, 2004), these groups are a continuous cycle of hierarchies for gay Latinos.

4.1.2 Femmephobia in the Queer Community

Study participants made recurring comments throughout the interview process about the various ways that gay Latino men were oppressed due to their intersecting identities. In addition to being subjugated from society at large, gay Latinos encounter a hierarchy within the gay community based on the practice of labeling (e.g. twink, bear, cub, otter, jock, daddy, etc.), further alienating them. The hierarchy, however, is only one of multiple forms of oppression within the queer community. To exacerbate their experiences, participants also talked extensively about experiencing femmephobia, which was manifested in similar ways as gay groups, particularly when it came to presentation. According to Blair and Hoskin (2014), femmephobia is a type of prejudice or discrimination that is directed at someone who is perceived as embodying feminine traits. In particular, gay Latinos experienced vulnerabilities in the form of discrimination for presenting in feminine ways.

In speaking about femmephobia, as referred to by participants, in the queer community, Dave talked about the importance of framing preferences when it came to dating, “the interesting thing about that [femmephobia] is most gay men will frame it as a “preference” to not be interested in feminine men.” Instead of explicitly expressing a dislike or disapproval for not being into feminine men, Dave thought that it was a careful decision to frame it as a matter of taste in men. In his experience hanging out around other men, Dave felt that men expected other gay men to “act like a guy,” especially when it came to relationships, otherwise they might as well be dating a woman. As men who are sexually, emotionally, and physically attracted to other men, Dave’s peers felt that the whole point of being gay was precisely being attracted to men that embody male-like characteristics. While Dave personally did not believe that being femme is outright rejected in the queer community, he felt that when it came to “romantic or sexual

contexts” men were hesitant to engage with femme men or were “straight up femmephobic.” Since, according to Dave, there’s “too much emphasis” on physical looks in the gay community and being femme was viewed as less attractive, femme men are automatically viewed as less than.

When specifically talking about his direct experiences, Dave referred back to his childhood. While growing up, Dave had more feminine traits than he does now. As a result, he was scolded by his dad who would tell him, “No, that’s not how real men talk or walk. You gotta stand up straight, you gotta do this and that.” For that reason, Dave avoided presenting in any feminine way within the queer community. Instead, Dave shared how he has been praised for not being feminine. One of his gay friends told him, “it’s cool that you’re not like one of those girly gays,” as he cannot stand them.

Due to negative perceptions of femme men in the queer community, some participants purposefully did things to appear less femme, even if it meant going against their way of being. This was the case for DJ, “when I go out on a regular night, I do my best to look more or less masculine. No-to-minimal makeup, not too short of shorts, nothing too feminine.” DJ was intentional about the clothes he wore before going out in order to avoid being the target of criticism for the way he looked. DJ avoided looking and doing anything that would signal any femme traits to others in public spaces. DJ continued,

It’s because too many times I’ve gotten “why do you have to be so gay (whatever that means),” “no fats, no femmes,” “you make it hard for ‘normal’ gays” and the like. It’s just a lot easier for me to be a little more masculine in some spaces and avoid these conversations

DJ's decision to appear more masculine presenting was directly influenced by expectations in the queer community; particularly those that demanded gay men to fulfill a level of masculinity. In times when DJ appeared to be "so gay," he was questioned for it or was told that he made it difficult for "normal gays" to be gay. Normal gays were those that embodied masculine tendencies. To avoid such confrontations, DJ felt like he had to conform to other's expectations, which meant downplaying femme qualities.

For DJ, femmephobia in the queer community extended beyond in-person experiences he had going out. Instead, he also talked about the presence of femmephobia via social media. Specifically, DJ said that "An app is the easiest place to be racist, to be femme-phobic, to be transphobic." When using Grindr, a social networking and dating app, DJ noticed that many profiles explicitly stated things like "No Blacks, no fats, no femmes," meaning that such groups of people were not welcome in those people's profiles. DJ speculated that people were bolder on social media apps about their biases than they were in person. Comparably, Ezekiel mentioned that it was common to see profiles that say, "'straight acting,' insinuating that masculinity is the standard for being seen as attractive in a romantic or sexual way" on dating apps like Grindr and Tinder.

In the same thread, Samuel and Melvin agreed that feminine men faced a greater burden when it came to being accepted. Samuel shared, "my perception is that our more feminine fellows bear the greatest stress and exposure to harm, both from inside and outside the lgbtq community." Femmephobia was not perceived as an issue that was solely perpetrated by people in the queer community. Instead, Samuel felt that it was a larger societal issue that was also common and enacted by people within the community. In agreeing and responding to Samuel's comment, Melvin added,

Femmephobia is real and has many consequences. In my experience, femmephobia is a direct outgrowth of internalized homophobia with traces of toxic masculinity anchored by ideals of cisnormativity. The often lazy, and unnuanced, reliance on ideas of machismo within Latino communities for example.

According to Melvin, femmephobia is a byproduct of masculinity, where men are expected to uphold ideals that represent what a male can and cannot do and what he should physically look like. Melvin was keenly aware that femmephobia is rooted in cisnormativity and not something that was exclusive or born out of the queer community.

In talking about Latinos in particular, Samuel added that machismo ideals contributed to femmephobia in the queer community, as men would resort to such ideals to put others down. Machismo refers to behavior exhibited by Mexican men, usually with a negative connotation (Arciniega, Anderson, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008; Fragoso & Kashubeck, 2000). Moreover, Melvin added that he has personally experienced femmephobia in various ways within different contexts, "I've experienced it from dating, to sexual violence, to my professional identity within in the academy. Sadly, it often isn't until I draw upon forms of toxic masculinity (i.e., physical and/or discursive violence) that folks will back down." Unfortunately, Melvin felt that he had to resort to some of the same ideals rooted in machismo in order to be able to deal with machismo. While he acknowledged that toxic masculinity was harmful, he also felt that it was one of the ways he could get out of physical violence, for example.

In their interactions, Samuel agreed that machismo played a significant role among Latinos and added,

The (rather simplistic) way in which I understand it works is "men are superior to women" and, as a consequence, "a man who relinquishes his superiority by acting as a

woman is even lower in the hierarchy." Thus, gay men are at the bottom and the more visible ones bear the even the worst part.

For Samuel, it made sense that feminine gay men would be at the bottom of a hierarchy based on machismo. Since women are viewed as less than men, when a man displays any characteristic that resembles that of a woman, he is bound to also be viewed as less than. Samuel concluded his thought by stating, "maybe femmephobia can also appear as a survival strategy within particularly noxious environments?" to which Melvin replied, "Most definitely that femmephobia can be a survival strategy in many environments. That is though because of a dependence on toxic forms of masculinity. The script can be rewritten if we begin to remove the dependency." For both Samuel and Melvin, femmephobia can be perceived as a survival strategy that is used when a man wants to feel more of a man; meaning that he wants to be further removed from traits associated with women. To do so, men oppress other men, particularly feminine men. It is a strategy that men can easily resort to when their masculinity is questioned, for example.

Although machismo is deeply rooted in the Latino community and is not easy or quick to dismantle, both Samuel and Melvin thought that it was possible to get to a point where machismo no longer dictated so-called acceptable roles for men, especially Latino men. Melvin advocated for the development of acceptable forms of masculinity that were not based on the subjugation of other men. In fact, Melvin felt that if men of color continued relying on white patriarchal notions of masculinity, then femmephobia would continue to be a viable and reliable tool for dealing with diverse sexualities and presentations.

For students like Ezekiel, femmephobia had a direct influence on the way he carried himself on and off campus. As a student who was heavily involved in academic and social based

organizations, Ezekiel felt that he had to assume a role that most closely resembled a “perfect gay that acts like a ‘straight masculine’ guy.” Even though Ezekiel described his personality as naturally expressive and flamboyant, he was pressured to act more masculine in order to be accepted,

I subconsciously deepen my voice and keep my hand gestures in check to fit in with the fraternity, campus administration, my campus peers, and my family. It's gotten to the point where it even becomes relaxing sometimes to enter into a hypermasculine space, even when I cannot relate to pretty much any of the topics the straight men talk about, like sports and outdoors things.

Successfully navigating an academic space while decreasing the possibility of being targeted for being feminine meant that Ezekiel had to pass as straight by subscribing to masculine standards of presentation. Due to his daily presence on campus, it had gotten to a point where Ezekiel no longer had to put effort into fulfilling a masculine role. Although masculinity is not synonymous with straight, presenting in masculine ways afforded Ezekiel acceptance and prevented him from being questioned about his sexuality.

As viewed through this theme, gay Latinos experienced vulnerabilities in the form of discrimination, particularly through femmephobia, for presenting in feminine ways. Femmephobia is rooted in a system of patriarchy where men and masculinity are valued over femininity (Abalos, 2002; hooks, 2004). Consequently, patriarchy demands that men rid themselves of their emotional parts, as they are associated with women (hooks, 2004). If gay Latino men do not fulfill masculine constructs, they are subjected to experiencing femmephobia, as viewed with the participants here. Coupled with patriarchy, femmephobia is also connected to heterosexism, which is a system known to devalue any identity that is not heterosexual, giving

power and domination to heterosexuals (Smith et al., 2008). Based on the premise of heterosexism, gay Latinos are automatically oppressed. Because femmephobia is connected to presentation and, as viewed with gay groups, presentation is connected to whiteness, femmephobia is also connected to white supremacy.

4.1.3 Being a Gay Latino in the Era of Trump

The current political climate proved to be a vulnerability for many of the participants in this study. Gay Latinos often referred back to the numerous ways that their multiple identities were actively under attack as a result of Trump's presidency. Due to comments made by Trump, participants in the study felt less safe on and off campus, felt as if they were personally being attacked, and experienced higher levels of anxiety than usual, amongst other things.

For Melvin it was clear, being gay and Latino meant that he was not accepted under the current administration. Trump's absence in many of the activities that past presidents have been involved in with relation to the Latino and LGBTQ communities signaled that he did not care for them. Instead, Melvin felt that Trump was catering to a different demographic across the United States, such as poor whites, Christians, and conservatives. Living in a major and more liberal U.S. city made Melvin feel safer. Still, there were instances that caused Melvin to be more considerate of the spaces that he inhabits, particularly when driving across states, "because I travel from New York to Chicago by car, I would never go out of my way to voice my Latinoness, or my queerness in Pennsylvania, Ohio, or Indiana." Although Melvin was fully accepting of his sexuality and out to others, he knew that there were things that he should not do in certain spaces. Known for being more conservative states, Melvin knew better than to verbalize two of his most salient identities when driving through Indiana, for example.

Ultimately, Melvin understood his decision to keep his identities to a minimum as a form of protection, “That’s how I take it. His bigotry has made me aware of where I am, and what I can or cannot do, not because I don’t want to do it, but because I want to protect myself.” Trump’s presidency made Melvin acutely aware of his surroundings, the things he could and could not say, and his overall presence across contexts.

When reflecting on his on-campus experiences specifically, Melvin talked about a student organization that was intimidating the larger campus and not one particular group of people. “At the very beginning of the first semester there was a huge political climate that was going on. It [student club] was actually funded by the university because they were a conservative club at school, and they declared themselves Trumpists.” According to Melvin, the student group made themselves very visible on campus for a period of time by visiting multiple classrooms while classes were in session. Trumpists wanted “to know how these classes were being taught to see if they were being taught in the rightist wing.” The incident led campus police to get involved. Since, according to Melvin, the student group was supported by the Trump administration, they were allowed to stay on campus as long as they did not infringe on others. Due to such incidents, Melvin and his peers were “on guard,” as it was possible that a “riot” could erupt at any minute.

Comparable to Melvin, driving long distances to get to and from school in the era of Trump proved to be traumatizing for DJ. After getting pulled over by a cop during one of his trips home over a school break, DJ was immediately asked whether he was a U.S. citizen and was forced to show documentation. While DJ understood that he was not required to show documentation, he decided to comply without question because the cops had guns with them and he did not want the incident to escalate in any way. After the cops tore everything up in his new

car and did not find anything, they let DJ go, “20 minutes later after being traumatized, I pulled over at the next rest stop, I like fixed all my shit in my car, and just sat there for a hot second to process what had just fucking happened.” This incident led DJ to believe that any time he drove long distances, he would surely be stopped. As a result, he felt like he had to prepare himself by always carrying his passport with him. Being stopped and interrogated in the manner that he was, confirmed to DJ,

that this is a police state towards Latinx people. Towards queer people. I feel like the administration is deferring to state’s rights at this point. Because if they can set a precedent of states’ rights, then at least half of the union will oppress queer people.

According to DJ, Trump’s administration is “vehemently anti-queer” but they are not going to show it at a federal level. Instead, he feels that they will defer to states as a form of strategy. DJ also expressed being scared for his friends who were undocumented. DJ questioned whether they would go back to school, be able to afford their legal fees, or whether they would be deported.

For Lupe, feelings related to safeness were much more intensified as a result of Trump being in office. In fact, Lupe shared that during our first interview he would have been hesitant to touch on the topic due to feelings of being “watched.” Being in a more comfortable state with his sexuality during our second interview, Lupe was more open to talking about the matter but still worried about his safety. “The thing is I am gay, so I’m afraid. I was afraid that someone is going to kick me the hell out [of the country] someday.” Even though Lupe was born in the United States and is a U.S. citizen, he felt that phenotypically looking Latino made it possible for government officials to kick him out of the country. Additionally, Lupe was afraid “that I was going to get my ass kicked, you know. I’m constantly looking over – that feeling of looking over your shoulders.” According to Lupe, the possibility of getting his “ass kicked” is a real one and

unfortunately, Lupe has come to the understanding that “If I get my ass beat, I’ll get my ass beat.” Thus, Lupe is constantly checking his surroundings.

To his advantage, however, Lupe also thought about his geographic location and how Los Angeles is not a conservative city, allowing him to be more open with his identities. At the same time, Lupe considered that living in Los Angeles could also be restricting, as it would prevent him from visiting other cities or moving elsewhere.

If I were to leave out of L.A. or go to another state, it doesn't apply anymore [level of safeness]. So, yes, if I wanted to go somewhere, I would be mortified and terrified. I would be cautious of what I do. I would be watching my mannerisms and the things that I would say because I don't know other than here.

In the end, regardless of where he lived, Lupe still expressed being afraid because he does not know when he will be attacked. “Yes, it gives me anxiety, but part of me is this constant internal battle of ‘it's going to happen, but not yet. Calm down.’” Feeling unsafe is exacerbated when going to places and he does not see anyone from the queer community “and it's more for two reasons. It's more because I'm gay and because I'm a Latino.”

It was during Drew's college years that president Trump was elected into office. Consequently, Drew was affected both in direct and indirect ways. Although he tried not to think about Trump, it was something that he could not avoid. “When it first happened I just started to have a lot of anxiety, because I started to think about long-term effects. Like, ‘well now this might happen, this might happen.’” Trump's election caused Drew to,

take a step back and be like, “How am I really being represented? And where do I even stand as a queer person of color, first-generation Latinx? Where do I fall in this society?

And how do other people see me and my family and my rights, our rights?” It was a lot to process. That’s the reason why I was affected— mentally and emotionally.

Like Lupe, Drew questioned potential life outcomes as a result of his racialized queerness. Additionally, Drew thought about the way his family and friends would also be affected. While Drew understood that being a queer person of color already put him at a disadvantage and presented its own set of challenges, Trump’s administration only brought those challenges to the forefront. “There was a lot of derogatory language and stereotypes that were being brought up that just made folks continue to stereotype Latino men or Latino women as lazy, like if they were taking jobs, comments about them being stupid.” According to Drew, President Trump’s comments extended to Latinos at large and they only served to criminalize them at a national level.

Similar to Melvin and DJ, Arturo’s level of safeness was affected by Trump’s presidency, especially when driving through towns that were unknown to him. In driving through rural parts of California, Arturo would get concerned over his safety, “right after the election, I had to stop by and get gas. And it felt unsafe for the first time. Just because of him being president, and me being Latino.” When getting off the car to pump gas, Arturo questioned whether someone was going to go up to him and start saying things. In leading up to his presidency, Trump built a campaign around verbally attacking underrepresented groups of people, specifically Latino men. Due to widespread stigma on Latinos, Arturo felt that strangers could maliciously approach him at any time.

Vulnerabilities as a result of Trump’s presidency were also prevalent at Arturo’s job. While interviewing a student candidate for a TRiO program, someone interrupted the conversation and said, “Oh, our president is gonna defund you [TRiO]. This is useless. Why are

you doing this? It's not gonna continue on anymore.” Arturo described the incident as not only “surprising” but also “scary.” The person who interrupted the interview moved on to question whether Arturo had watched Trump’s state of the union address where he talked about defunding TRiO programs. Even though Arturo reported the incident to the principal’s office, he described them as being “nonchalant” about the whole incident. Overall, Trump’s presidency made Arturo feel unsafe, even when speaking Spanish.

Racialized incidents discussed here are rooted in a system of racism, which consists of individual actions and institutional norms that sustain white privilege while oppressing minoritized people (Harper, 2012), in this case gay Latinos. Since racism is about maintaining power within whiteness, it is inherently tied to a system of white supremacy. Coupled with racism and ultimately white supremacy, homophobic incidents discussed here are also connected to racist nativism. According to Huber, Lopez, Malagon, Velez, & Solorzano (2008), racist nativism is,

The assigning of values to real or imagined differences, in order to justify the superiority of the native, who is to be perceived white, over that of the non-native, who is perceived to be People and Immigrants of Color, and thereby defend the right of whites, or the natives, to dominance (p. 42)

Racist nativism is situated within a historical context that seeks to examine the manner in which Latina/o communities have come to be perceived as non-native and therefore not belonging in United States society (Gomez & Huber, 2019). Additionally, it is used as a tool to examine the intersection of race and immigration status. For example, Lupe feared being kicked out of the country for being Latino under Trump’s presidency. While he was born in the U.S., he felt that the possibility of being kicked out due to his race/ethnicity was a real one.

4.1.4 Racialized and Homophobic Incidents

Literature on queer Latinos has noted that they often encounter many difficulties throughout their lives as a result of their race/ethnicity and their sexual orientations (Akerlund & Cheung, 2000; Ocampo, 2014; Wall & Washington, 1991). This theme specifically centers racialized incidents that gay Latinos experienced at home, the classroom, and student organizations on campus– from microaggressions to being physically attacked. Again, this theme is connected to racism and homophobia.

Ian identified as African Peruvian. Due to his physical, racial ambiguity, he expressed experiencing more discrimination than other individuals, including his peers at school. For example, Ian was the target of physical attacks since his elementary school years, “I got molested three times by the older kids... They’d say, ‘Oh, look at this dark skin, little black kid.’” As a darker skinned Latino with “really curly and coarse hair,” Ian felt that the attacks he underwent in the school bathroom were solely based on the way he looked, particularly his skin color and hair. At such young age, Ian did not know how to make sense of the racism he experienced. He simply expressed being “messed up in the head” as a result of the attacks.

For Ian, racialized incidents continued until his college years. While some people assumed he did not know how to speak English, there were others who believed he did not speak Spanish. In other cases, he was randomly asked where his sombrero was at, or people would be surprised that he did not know how to make pupusas, a Salvadoran dish, even though he was not Salvadoran. Ian was regularly mistaken for being Mexican and Puerto Rican, something that really bothered him. In fact, his peers at school would question his last name, saying that it did

not sound Mexican. Moreover, his peers would play Mexican corridos and banda, genres of music in Spanish, and would be surprised when Ian did not know who the artists were.

Living in a predominantly white community also led Ian to encounter racism. When he first moved into his neighborhood, he was yelled at by people “who hated people of color. They would call me an f-ing nigger, tell me that I needed to watch myself when I was walking at night.” Consequently, Ian would get “really angry” but felt like he could not do anything about it. To exacerbate the situation, Ian was also discriminated against due to the intersectionality of his race with his other identities, “being a person of color and, being part of LGBT community, and also being formerly incarcerated, I have all three. Really contributed to a lot of challenges that I’ve had.” For example, his classmates in college avoided sitting next to him because he was gay or they looked at him as if he was crazy when he spoke Spanish. Even though his peers did not always say anything directly at Ian, they simply moved across the room to avoid sitting near him. Due to his criminal background, Ian also got his work applications overlooked. Answering “yes” to the “Have you ever been convicted of a felony?” question, automatically got Ian’s work applications dismissed.

Like Ian, Angel experienced racialized incidents on and off campus. One of the most significant experiences he had involved being kicked out of a leadership position within a student services organization that he was a part of throughout his undergraduate years. In his explanation for being kicked out, Angel said that he was discriminated because he was a “male of color” while the rest of the people that served on the committee were white women. When Angel brought his concern to the committee’s attention, they made him feel as if he was “crazy” for feeling the way he did. Since Angel attended a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and felt like he

was discriminated against on the basis of his race/ethnicity, he felt like the incident could not be true,

At first I definitely felt crazy because at an institution that prides itself on diversity I felt like I was gonna get challenged for feeling the way that I did. I was scared to say I was accusing someone of racially discriminating me.

According to Angel, attending a diverse college meant that he could not feel the way he did. Moreover, Angel felt “crazy” about the incident because he had not experienced much racism in his life. Most of the discrimination he faced was due to his sexuality, making him double guess any experiences he had involving race, “I genuinely felt like I am crazy. I felt like I was almost pulling this out of thin air and it wasn’t until other students started voicing similar concerns that I started to feel okay with it.” Even though Angel initially felt “invalidated,” voicing his opinion led other students of color to also voice their experiences with racial discrimination on campus, which, in turn, empowered Angel to be more vocal.

Angel also talked about being randomly stopped and questioned by the police on his way home from school. Initially, Angel did not make much of it. However, after giving it some thought, he started to question why he was specifically targeted out of everyone, which led him to conclude that it was because he was “wearing dark clothes” and because he looked Hispanic. Angel felt that it was only a matter of time before police stopped him again. During his sophomore year of college, Angel was taking a class where he was the only Latino student. In talking about politics, the professor stopped and asked Angel if he had experienced something similar when he was in Mexico. Angel was caught off guard by the question, especially since he had never visited Mexico. Due to such experiences, Angel felt like he was being targeted for no reason other than his identities.

In a different context, Ezekiel also talked about experiencing discrimination. After joining a predominantly white fraternity, Ezekiel began to experience microaggressions from his frat brothers— both due to his race and sexuality. Upon disclosing his sexual orientation, Ezekiel's peers started to tokenize him, "I became tokenized as being the liberal, the Mexican, the gay person. And so, I'm basically the spokesperson for everything not straight, white man. I had to explain some women things to them, too." As a gay Latino, Ezekiel became his fraternity's go to person for anything related to sexuality, race, and gender, "if it's not pertaining to straight, white men and conservatism, then, I was forced to do the labor of educating them... and it was so full of microaggressions." For instance, while living in the fraternity house, "I found out that one of my brothers thought it would be funny to put a bag of ice outside of my door to represent ICE– Immigration Customs Enforcement." Due to the incident, Ezekiel had to explain why it was wrong.

Along the same lines, one day after Trump's election, Ezekiel was walking to class when one of his friends said, "'Hey, Ezekiel, I just wanted to say I'm sorry.' And I'm like, 'For what?' And he was like, 'Sorry that you're going to get deported'" Little did his friend know, Ezekiel's stepmother had recently been deported. After recurring microaggressions, Ezekiel stated that they were taking a toll on him. In his opinion, it took more effort for Ezekiel to care and hold on to everything that his frat brothers said than for them to simply to avoid microaggressing him, particularly due to their "white fragility." Even when Ezekiel attempted to explain why certain things they said were wrong, his brothers would question why everything had to be about race, for example, or they went as far as calling him racist.

For Roberto, experiencing racism and homophobia started at a young age. Roberto described being harassed by a group of so-called friends on New Year's Eve while he was in

eighth grade. Initially, one of his friends called him over the phone and started speaking “normally” but after some time his comments became very homophobic and racist. Roberto shared, “it [phone conversation] turned into ‘I bet you want to get fucked...Spic, go back to your country.’” Even though Roberto hung up the phone, the calls continued for an additional 45 minutes but with more guys on the line verbally attacking him. By the time that school was back in session after winter break, many of Roberto’s peers knew about the calls and also started to spread the rumor that he was gay, even though Roberto was not out.

With the progression of time, the bullying and harassing got worse— to the point that Roberto was physically attacked. When walking in the school hallways people would throw papers and books at Roberto while calling him a “f-a-g” and threatening to kill him. In one particular instance during his high school years, Roberto was walking from one class to another when one of his bullies attacked him,

I was going down the stairs, and then, he tried to kick me down...then he shoved me against the wall and he took a chair and he swung it at my head but he missed. He kept threatening to attack me again. Then, I was sitting down in my chair and he came up from behind me. He was wearing red and gray, so I remember that and started choking me.

As he was being choked, Roberto realized that he could not breathe and thought that the possibility of him dying was a real one. Roberto fought back and eventually and successfully got out of the lock that he was in. He was hesitant to report the incident to the school’s central administration because they never did anything about it in the past. In fact, when Roberto reported prior incidents, the principal and vice principals would respond by telling him that “boys will be boys” and that he needed to thicken his skin. One day prior to the attack, Roberto

recalled being warned by one of his peers that he was going to be attacked by a group of guys that week. Roberto went to report it to the vice principal but she did not believe him,

the next day, that's when I was attacked. So, she [vice principal] could have prevented it.

I blame her...So early on, I knew I could never trust school administration. They're never going to believe me. They're going to blame me. And they're never going to protect me.

And that's what I learned, at 14 years old and why I do not trust the administration.

Due to a lack of response from the school's administration, Roberto distrusts school administrators to this day. Since Roberto suffered from anorexia, he said that the bullying he experienced only made matters worse. During the month that he was attacked, Roberto lost a total of 30 pounds.

As a direct result of participants' experiences connected to their race and sexuality, racism, racist nativism, and heterosexism are the underlying systems of oppression with this theme. Aligned with Huber et al.'s. (2008) conceptualization of racist nativism, Ezekiel was perceived as someone who did not belong in the U.S. and therefore was told by a white peer that he was going to be deported, especially after the current president was elected. Similarly, Roberto was told to go back to his country, displaying the attitudes towards Latinas/os and lack of desire for people like him in this country. Both students were perceived as non-native and thus, as not belonging (Gomez & Huber, 2019). Because participants also talked about experiencing discrimination due to their sexuality, this theme is also connected to heterosexism, which is known to devalue any identity that is not heterosexual, giving privilege and power to heterosexuals (Smith et al., 2008). Both Ian and Roberto shared being avoided by peers at school for being gay while also being physically attacked for the same reason.

4.2 Protective Factors

Equally important to a resilience framework are protective factors. Protective factors are known to ameliorate the adversity that an individual encounters— from personal strengths that someone already has to things that they can access (Morales & Trotman, 2010). Guided by the following research question— what are the protective factors that are pertinent to the lives of gay Latino males?— this section discusses the following four protective factors employed and accessed by gay Latino men to deal with challenges they encountered: (1) the role of technology, (2) art, music, and writing, (3) education as an escape, and (4) influential people.

4.2.1 The Role of Technology

Participants in this study encountered numerous challenges, such as rejection, that prevented them from exploring their sexualities. In some instances, gay Latinos did not even receive the opportunity to learn or know what it meant to be gay, among other sexual orientations. Due to rejection that they received from family, friends, peers at school, and other institutional agents (e.g. teachers, administrators, principals, etc.), they did not have the option to ask questions or speak freely about their sexuality. Instead, some gay Latinos in this study had to find ways of developing and exploring their identities outside of their familial and educational contexts. As a result, technology became an important outlet that provided them with a level of autonomy that was non-existent in other spaces.

Despite Drew knowing that he was gay early in his life, he could not explore his sexuality publicly due to societal and cultural expectations. Throughout his elementary school years, Drew encountered homophobia from peers at school. At home, he knew that his sexuality would not be

accepted by his parents, so he kept it a secret, which meant that he could not explore it as much as he would have liked. Consequently, Drew resorted to his computer,

I remember I had my computer. I would look stuff up like, ‘What does gay mean?’ things like that. I would read stories on a forum....that’s how I learned about labels and things. I learned that being gay isn’t just like something you choose. It’s part of your identity, it’s part of who you are.

Drew started reading articles and forums on people coming out on the internet. Drew learned that “there’s a process to being gay. I could already tell that being gay wasn’t normal [to society]. In addition to surfing the web and reading other people’s stories, Drew also looked through pictures, “I would look at images. I would watch videos too. They were just like anime videos of queer characters because I would read fanfiction and then I would follow the fandom and watch them on YouTube.” Browsing the internet led Drew to know that he was not on his own, as there were others who also kept their sexuality “low key” as a form of protection.

Moreover, it was through the internet, particularly through chat rooms, that Drew found out about the *pride festival*⁴, which he ended up attending. Chat rooms allowed Drew to have conversations with people, ask questions, and also learn about things like gender. The internet not only served as a protective factor in terms of learning and exposure to the queer community but also in the sense that it did not require Drew to have conversations about his sexuality in person. Instead, it was something that he could do on his own accord. In addition, Drew also played *The Sims*, a video game, which allowed him to pair same sex characters as couples. Seeing two characters of the same sex made sexuality real for Drew and also showed him what being gay meant and what it could look like.

⁴ Outdoor events celebrating lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender, and intersex culture and pride.

Tiago experienced a rough childhood. He said that the messages he received about what it meant to be gay were always negative. In fact, Tiago shared that everything he learned about his sexuality “was all through discrimination. It was never a positive image.” It was until he started joining online chat rooms that his perceptions began to change. He learned that there was a community of sexually minoritized people and that they were not all the bad things people made them out to be. Since Tiago rarely had exposure to a network of other gay men, he did not have the option to ask and learn about things that he wanted to know more about, such as sex. According to Tiago, “there was a sense of community. Even learning how to have sex. You don’t have peers [outside of the gay community] telling you how – you know, it’s weird, but it’s real. I would be asking, like, ‘Guys, how do you do it?’” Although Tiago did not intend to have sex with people on the chat room, he wanted to learn more about it.

In addition to asking about sex, Tiago also used it to get connected with a gay community at a social level. He asked about places to go dance, gay friendly bars, and places to avoid going to, among other things. Because chat rooms were anonymous, they worked to Tiago’s advantage, as he considered himself too shy to ask certain things, even among his gay friends. Tiago shared, “the chat was great because it was anonymous. So, you could ask about details that were incredibly embarrassing – too sexual, sometimes. But, I just wanted to know. And people would share porn, and porn was a very educational tool.” Conversations that Tiago had in the chat room coupled with pornography led him to have a more accurate perception of the process of having sex. Some chat rooms were particularly helpful because they also catered to specific racial/ethnic groups, allowing Tiago to join the Latin chat. Although Tiago considered chat rooms a great resource, he also thought that they could be a dangerous space because some people are simply looking to have sex with others, users can suggest shady places to visit, or because of the sharing

of personal information could lead to dangerous encounters. For these reasons, Tiago accessed the chat room but was also conscious of what he shared.

Aside from using chat rooms as a tool for learning, participants also made use of YouTube, a video sharing website. For example, Michael used YouTube to learn about different sexualities and to hear people's coming out story. The coming out process was a difficult one for Michael because he did not know what being gay meant. Apart from hearing the word "gay" used in a negative way, he did not know anything about it. Since his peers used the words "gay" and "faggot" as a way to insult other students, including Michael, he did not think he was gay because he was not a bad person. After meeting someone in his school who identified as bisexual, Michael decided that bisexual was the term that he would use to describe his sexuality. It was not until he used YouTube that Michael really started to understand more about his sexual orientation. "I went to YouTube and I remember looking up videos about people being bi. And there was just people talking about it and their different struggles. I was like, 'this kind of seems similar to me.'" It was through YouTube that Michael came to the conclusion that he was not bisexual but instead he was gay.

From his first exposure to YouTube, Michael knew that it was a tool that he could easily access in order to learn more about the LGBTQ community, "from there, I used to look up gay related TV shows or gay related characters on TV shows and just listen and watch their love stories. It was so interesting and so beautiful at the same time." Michael learned that there were other sexualities besides being gay and bisexual. It was on YouTube that he first heard the term queer. In addition to being educated on different sexualities, Michael also found hope through the video sharing platform, "it also helped me stay positive because if these people can have great outcomes while being gay, then why can't I?" Hearing people talk about their sexualities in

positive ways, hearing their coming out stories, and their successes, helped Michael stay positive and hopeful during difficult times.

Like Michael, Cole and Iggy both used YouTube as a protective factor. Cole, in particular, used it to better prepare himself for when he decided to come out to his mother. Cole wanted to be sure of his sexuality before he came out to her, as she was someone important to him and someone whom he had a very close relationship with. In building up to coming out to her, Cole used YouTube and social media on a regular basis as a way to organize and formulate responses to potential questions that might have arisen, “YouTube had a really big grow in me getting comfortable with my own identity as a gay male because I had to break down a lot of negative stereotypes I had internalized.”

YouTube was an important way for Cole to destigmatize many of the negative connotations that he associated with the word gay, particularly as a result of the way he heard it used in his family. Cole had gay family members and he noticed that his parents were especially critical of them. In watching YouTube, Cole followed two main YouTubers, Tyler Oakley; and Will and JR, a couple. In referring to the couple. Cole said,

they would post videos every day about their life as a gay couple, and how it’s a normal life like any other. And so, those two really helped me break down the negative stereotypes. Then, I started learning about the gay community, and what being gay really means and that it was something normal.

Watching those videos helped Cole understand that being gay was normal and that it was perfectly fine to have a boyfriend. Even though Cole followed other YouTubers, he learned most from Tyler, and Will and JR.

Similarly, Iggy acquired his initial understandings of what it meant to be gay from YouTube and from surfing the web. Iggy shared that he learned “mainly through the internet, just looking up stuff. That's all I really had, like I didn't know anyone, like no one was really out or anything.” Due to not having access to any role models or anyone that he could go to for information about the gay community, Iggy used YouTube as an educational tool. Iggy remembered watching two guys kissing as one of his first videos and thinking that it was a “nice feeling,” especially since he had never seen anything like it. In addition to using YouTube, Iggy also took an “Am I gay?” test and googled “what exactly does it mean to be gay?; what do you do if you find out you are gay?” He learned that there was a spectrum to being gay and that not all gay people were the same. This was particularly helpful to Iggy because initially he felt that being gay meant being flamboyant and loud. Iggy knew that if he did not go out of his way to learn about his sexuality that he would not have gotten it elsewhere because if people around him did not talk about it, then he would not either. Like Michael, Iggy found people that were going through the same struggles that he was undergoing. The encouragement that he saw between people online slowly helped Iggy challenge the stigmatized portrayals of gay people that he too had internalized.

4.2.2 Art, Music, and Writing

In coping with different forms of adversity, participants accessed resources that did not necessarily require them to interact with other individuals. Such resources included things like art, music, and writing. The fact that these three protective factors were readily available made them especially useful for gay Latino males in this study, particularly for those that were not out or who were out to a few people.

Lupe encountered numerous challenges throughout his life— from fearing for his safety due to the current political climate to considering suicide because of his sexuality. Growing up, Lupe did not have access to any role models or people that he could talk to about being gay, making his coming out process particularly difficult,

I heard the term of gay is bad, that's nasty. I didn't know anyone from the LGBT, anyone who was queer or knew anything of it. It was never presented in our house, in school, in public. It was nowhere to be seen.

Since the word gay had a negative connotation to it, Lupe did not associate with it. Due to the lack of resources and information related to the gay community, Lupe used his high school art class as an outlet to cope with his struggles. He shared, “the only thing that was kind of keeping me sane was art. Art was my release. I could draw whatever I wanted with all the colors that I wanted without being judged. It was a masterpiece.” At the time, Lupe felt an intense pressure to fulfill familial and cultural expectations, leading him to depression. According to Lupe, it was normal and expected not to talk about feelings, intimacy, and fears in Latino culture. Thus, art was the activity that kept him “sane.” In talking about his art teacher, Lupe recalled,

There was always this one image...He just left it as a display, he never did anything with it. And it was the picture of a mannequin that he was drawing, like a model, but it was never completed. And the thing was that for me, that was kind of the first time I identified something gay in a way, because the mannequin didn't have a face. It didn't have any kind of markers to identify if it was a guy or a girl. But it had the body type of a guy but posing in a femalistic way. You know, femininity. And I thought that was the coolest thing ever. But for me, that was kind of one thing that drew my attention and that

kind of sparked for me more to draw. I got into charcoal painting and through that my sexuality started to come into question.

Attending his art class in high school was the first time that Lupe identified something as gay. Even then, the mannequin was not something that was presented to Lupe as a tool to learn more about the gay community. Instead, it was something that he identified on his own and used it to propel and develop his sexuality. Since that moment, art became an outlet to express his sexuality.

With the progression of time, writing also became a healthy outlet for Lupe, “part of me has a fascination for English or writing as an adult because everything that I couldn’t say, I’m writing it with intensity.” As a child, Lupe kept a lot of things to himself. Writing allowed him to say all that he wanted without being reprimanded for it, as he would have in his cultural context. Compared to drawing, Lupe considered writing as more detailed and more in depth. In fact, Lupe started a personal blog where he wrote about multiple experiences, including coming out, which helped with his depression and anxiety.

Coupled with art and writing, Lupe identified music as a protective factor. Although his playlist was filled with “depressing-ass songs,” he described them as comforting. Since Lupe received cultural messages that prevented him from crying, to the point that he did not feel like a human, music was a way for him to know that he was normal and was in fact human. In listening to his playlist, Lupe was intentional about avoiding mainstream music and strictly listening to queer artists, especially those that were “unapologetically queer.” It was through music that Lupe became more aware of his mental health and emotions, something that was never discussed prior to that. Ultimately, Lupe described music as his life.

Aside from exposure to queer culture through technology, Drew made use of music to cope with challenges, especially after coming out to his parents and experiencing a negative response.

That [playing the flute] was always really important to me...I would play my instrument when I was frustrated or when I just wanted to practice and when I was stressed out. That helped a lot and made me feel better when things were getting bad with my parents.

Upon coming out to his mom, she told him that both Drew and her were failures. Drew was considered a failure for being gay and she was a failure because she felt that she failed as a mother. Because of such incidents, Drew turned to music to help him feel better. Drew perceived playing the flute as, "it was a coping mechanism, in a way. It was a freedom of expression for me. It doesn't have a label attached to it." Since playing instruments did not have a stigma or negative label attached to it, unlike his sexuality, it served as an outlet. Additionally, music helped with his anxiety and allowed him to relax when he could not find answers to questions. Drew played an instrument throughout elementary school and was involved with mariachi and an orchestra during high school years.

Transitioning into college, Drew's interest in playing musical instruments to feel better transferred over to decorating his room. Drew described the process of decorating as a form of expression that simultaneously allowed him to remain connected with his culture through what he described as themes,

Right now, it's [theme] cactus but I mixed it with my cultural identity as well, so it's Mexican. It's a bunch of items that pertain to my culture and that help me cope and vent. Decorating my room reminds me of who I am.

As someone who was strongly attached to his Latino identity, using art in the form of decorating allowed Drew to stay closely connected to, in this case, his Mexicanness. At the same time, Drew was also drawn to literature that he could identify with, “I always found myself drawn by Frankenstein because he was an outsider... I loved Jane Eyre. I really like reading and learning about the way that these women or outsiders basically built community, how they experienced different phobias.” Since, according to Drew, Frankenstein was ostracized for the way he looked and queer characters were always viewed as outsiders, Drew was able to identify with some of those characters. Reading such books influenced Drew’s writing while in college. He began to take more risks in his writing and became a lot more interested in queer topics, including queer theory.

Tied to education as an escape, Saul used writing as an outlet that validated and motivated him to do well in school while leaving room to express thoughts and feelings. Writing affirmed him that he was smart and that he could produce thoughtful ideas, despite not being a native English speaker. In a college class of 400 students, Saul received the top paper, further motivating and letting him know that he could do well, especially in a class that was meant to weed students out. Saul shared,

my writing is an outlet for me now. At my best, when I give myself a time to self-reflect to figure out where I’m at right now, what I need to do better, how can I take better care of myself and write that down. I have a journal and I keep my thoughts and my feelings in there.

As viewed earlier, Saul experienced multiple vulnerabilities, such as being bullied for being gay. He grew up in an environment that prevented him from exploring his sexuality. Consequently, it was not until late in his college years that he started to embrace his sexuality. Consistent with his

yearning for an education, Saul used writing to express things that he was going through— both positive and negative things. To this day, writing remains an important outlet for Saul.

For Pablo, writing was a core part of his identity. Pablo became interested in writing ever since he was in elementary school. When asked how it was that he became invested in writing he shared, “We started writing journals in elementary. I kept going with it. I was so moved by this [writing]... It provided me with this newfound agency as a kid and I just kept going, even after that [elementary school].” Prior to getting into writing, Pablo attempted to play sports but he was discouraged because his family wasn’t supportive. When he excitedly approached his father and told him that he joined volleyball, his father responded by saying that it was a women’s sport. As a result, Pablo dropped the sport and focused on his writing.

In dealing with vulnerabilities throughout his life, writing was something that was consistently important for Pablo. Pablo shared that as he started his undergraduate career, “I allowed myself to be vulnerable to nobody else other than myself. Once I was able to put things onto the page, I felt liberated.” It was through writing that Pablo felt free to be whoever he wanted to be— something that he was prevented from doing throughout his childhood. Pablo considered himself a late bloomer, as he did not come into terms with his sexuality until his college years. Prior to that, Pablo expressed having a fear of being gay. More specifically, he shared,

I think, like, at some point, Latino men that come out of the closet, they have to negotiate with the privileges that they know they're gonna lose... You actively know that you have this huge possibility that you're gonna lose your support system, your friends, your family

Pablo considered that there were certain barriers in Latino culture that prevented Latino men from being gay. Due to the aforementioned challenges, Pablo felt confined, leading him to

writing, which helped him feel liberated. In his writing, Pablo was able to explore different topics, whether it was things he experienced or questions he had. His journal included topics like, the first time he had sex with a guy and reflecting on how maybe that was not for him; coming out to his parents; and the process to coming out to his parents and the fear before telling them. Although Pablo was unsure of the process or coping mechanisms for other people, he contended that he did not know where he would be if he did not process his thoughts in writing.

4.2.3 Education as an Escape

For many participants in this study, education was understood as not only a path to opportunities and success but also as an escape from many of the vulnerabilities that they experienced throughout their lives. For example, doing well in school at an early age provided gay Latino males with the hope and vision that if they kept doing well throughout their schooling, they would be able to escape the rejection they experienced from family and peers by the time they went to college. Interestingly, however, there were instances where school contexts, such as the classroom, also served as points of vulnerabilities, as being in the classroom did not prevent some participants from being bullied or attacked. Nonetheless, education was perceived as a protective factor for the participants here.

Saul performed well academically all throughout elementary and middle school. According to Saul, education gave him the opportunity to exercise a level of autonomy, something that he did not have at home, especially in a time when he was struggling to make sense of his sexuality. However, as Saul started his middle school years, he began to see a decline in his grades because he was not being challenged. He described not being in “an environment that was conducive toward aspiring toward a higher education or a want to expand

upon your understanding of the world... But I knew that that's something that I craved that I wasn't getting." As a result, Saul approached his counselor with intentions of being placed in more advanced courses and said, "I'm not being challenged. It's embarrassing the work that we're doing. I'm doing work that I remember doing in third grade. I'm not learning anything." Despite Saul advocating for himself by asking for more challenging coursework, his counselor did not do anything about it.

To exacerbate the situation, Saul did not have many friends and was bullied at school for being gay. Consequently, he did his best to focus on school. It was not until one of his high school counselors asked him "Why aren't you in Avid? You're doing well in your classes. Why aren't you involved in anything? Do you want to go to college?" I'm like, 'Of course. That's always been my goal.'" Soon after, Saul was enrolled in all honors and AP courses during his junior year of high school and got involved with band, was senior class president, was a rally commissioner, was yearbook editor, and served as president of the Key Club. Saul graduated top three of his class and received a full ride scholarship as a Gates Millennium scholar. Due to being deprived of a rigorous education early in his academic trajectory, Saul made up for it in his last two years of high school.

Education continued to be an important outlet for Saul as he transitioned into college, as it provided him with autonomy, "It [college] gave me the power to decide, to make choices. I didn't have that before. Everything in my life before then was decided for me." Up until college, it was Saul's dad that controlled everything, including his thoughts and opinions. It was not until college that Saul was able to make his own decisions, without anybody else's input. Saul described it as "one of the most liberating things I've ever experienced... It gave me that time to kind of recalibrate my whole identity." Although Saul still experienced internal battles of not

wanting to be gay, being in college positioned him to move into the direction of making decisions to make sense of who he was as a person. It was precisely through his college experiences and living on a Latino floor his freshmen year that Saul changed his perspective on his Latinidad, “That’s when I realized my Latino identity is really important to me and I’ve suppressed it for so long that I’m so ready to come back into my own and connect to my roots.” It was because of his college education that Saul came to strongly identify with his Latino identity and considered it the most salient in his first three years of college. Prior to that point, Saul understood being Latino in negative ways because of machista culture. He felt pressured to be a man that he did not want to become. Transitioning into his senior year and as a part of studying abroad, Saul also got the opportunity to explore his sexuality, “that summer was pivotal in my identity as it related to like my sexual identity as a gay man.” According to Saul, that was the first time that he was able to explore his sexual identity in his entire life.

Comparable to Saul, Ian enjoyed school because he viewed it as an escape from reality; a reality in which he was sexually abused, struggled to come into terms with his sexuality, had to take care of his younger brother who suffered from health complications, and was bullied, among other things. Although Ian hated recess and lunchtime due to the bullying, class was different for him, “I liked to go to class. When I was in the classroom, it was awesome...I found an escape in my education.” While he was in class, Ian did not have to think about taking care of his brother who was born premature and had cerebral palsy, think about his step dad getting angry at him, or think about the sexual abuse that he suffered from. Instead, Ian could focus his energy on studying and doing well in school. Fortunately, according to Ian, he never had much of a problem doing well in anything that he chose to do, including his academics. For example, in his

elementary school years, Ian joined an essay competition. Although he did not win, he still received an award for doing a good job.

When transitioning into college, Ian knew that taking advantage of his available resources would yield both short and long term successes. As a result, Ian deliberately sought out opportunities for involvement,

from the very first semester, I got involved with M.E.Ch.A, (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) and then, after that, it was student government, and after that, because I got a 4.0 my first semester, I got PTK (Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society)...When I first started taking the classes here, I jumped in with both feet, I went all out.

Ian shared that he was taking his education seriously and so he was intentional about meeting different institutional stakeholders in his college and figuring out what services he could apply for. Additionally, he understood education as a way to help others, leading him to become a tutor in the subjects that he was especially strong at, such as mathematics. Ian explored the different ways that he could be a resource to people and capitalized on those opportunities in the service of others.

Due to the racism and homophobia that Roberto experienced during his high school years, he turned to his studies and grades to help him cope. Since Roberto was being bullied and had little to no friends at school, he resorted to his academics as a protective factor, “my intelligence was the only thing I had. And it was also the only thing I knew would get me out [of being bullied].” It was clear for Roberto; getting good grades was the ticket for him to get out of his hometown and especially away from the people that caused him a lot of pain.

I knew the only way to not be harassed and bullied by them [peers at school] for the rest of my life was to get really good grades to get out of there [hometown]. I purposefully studied very hard to get my grades up, so I would be able to make that choice later in life. By getting good grades, Roberto thought that he would have the ability to apply to and get accepted to out of state colleges and universities. To increase his possibilities of going to a good university, Roberto was enrolled in multiple Advanced Placement courses. There, he met two of his friends whom he started to academically compete with to see who would get the better grades, “we were in competition. And that helped. Literally, we would get an A and then it became who had the higher A. So, who had the 93 versus the 94.” Not only did Roberto notice a significant increase in his grade point average but he also had fun. In retrospect, Roberto understood that when someone undergoes a notable increase in their grades it is worthy of attention “because, when you’re being bullied, you don’t have friends. You don’t have the social life. So, you really have nothing else to do but study.” Even though education served as an escape, Roberto suggested school officials to be attentive of that.

In the same thread, Francisco viewed his education as a way to get out of his home state and have more agency over his sexuality. Although Francisco did not particularly enjoy school, he was motivated to do well academically because he wanted to go to a place that welcomed his sexuality. Since his goal was to “get out,” Francisco did well in middle school and saw a peak in his grades; to the point that he was considered the star student in his class. By getting good grades, Francisco was in fact able to go to a school of his choosing.

For Pablo, education was an escape that was inextricably linked with his safety and resilience. Pablo perceived his education as a stepping-stone to accomplish larger goals that he had set for himself, such as helping and giving back to the community that he grew up in. Due to

its proximity to the U.S.–Mexico border, Pablo described his hometown as highly surveilled. Consequently, Pablo had to carry his birth certificate with him to prove that his U.S. citizenship status. Given some of the issues he witnessed in his community as a child, Pablo saw education as an escape from his community that would eventually lead to helping people in that very same community. Pablo shared, “I wanted to escape this frail person that I was, and also some of the things that I was kind of not understanding in my own community...And then it became resilience— that’s the word because I understood that I had power to go back and change my community.” It was through his education that Pablo acquired the credentials to go back home and teach at one of the local colleges. Pablo enjoyed going back and teaching people basic composition, including those that were older than him. “I felt realized. I felt that I was giving back, that I went through the hoops. I ended up here. I was even teaching Gloria Anzaldua. It was amazing.” It was through academia that Pablo found both an escape and safety. According to Pablo, he was able to write and read whatever he wanted, which only expanded his understanding of the world and especially his community.

Tiago underwent many vulnerabilities as a child. At an early age, he was well aware that he was different from most people around him because of his sexuality. Growing up in a strict catholic home, Tiago knew that being gay was not accepted so he tried to find ways of keeping it a secret, “I was a child, but I was thinking, ‘maybe I can pretend that I’m not gay until they [parents] die,’ and I was making the math, like, ‘Okay, so, I can come out when I am like 60.’” Since Tiago wanted to “protect” his parents from knowing, he did what he could to keep his sexuality from them, or at least attempted to. Attending a catholic elementary school where people with different levels of authority (e.g. priests, teachers, students) discriminated against

gay students made it especially difficult for Tiago, because even though he tried to hide his sexuality, he knew that other people were aware.

Although going to elementary and middle school, in many ways, were toxic places for Tiago and his sexual identity development, his education became a form of an escape. Tiago shared, “my defense was [educational] excellence— just being the best, and the best, and the best [in class].” Even though some of his professors did not want to answer any of his questions and did things to try and make Tiago fail, he still managed to be the “best” in school. Such mentality persisted even when he transitioned into college. Although Tiago was not deliberately hiding his sexuality from his peers in college, he also did not want his sexual orientation to become his defining identity. He tried to make people think “Oh, he’s gay but he’s also something else. Tiago is gay but he’s super smart....Or maybe I cannot say that I am gay at all.” According to Tiago, for others to think of something other than his sexuality, he needed to keep doing well in school. Only then would people disassociate his sexuality when thinking of or referring to him. Even in college, Tiago was attached to this idea of excellence as a “defense mechanism.” At the same time, he described his education and desire to do well as “therapy.” In retrospect, Tiago said that he made a “whole career around being academically disciplined.” Although he understands that what he went through was not a healthy situation, he also points to the fact that if it were not for doing well in school, he would not have had any other outlet.

4.2.4 Influential People

The overwhelming majority of participants in this study underscored the importance of influential people in their lives. When experiencing a multitude of vulnerabilities, influential people were consistently referenced as a protective factor for gay Latino males. Influential

people included mentors and advisors; counselors; kin networks; and chosen family. In referencing the aforementioned people, participants specifically talked about the role of women. For some students, these people were especially influential at certain points in their lives (e.g. elementary school, high school, college, etc.) while for others they were important throughout their lives.

4.2.4.1 Role of Women

Growing up, Ezekiel underwent a very independent and isolated childhood—to the point that he experienced food insecurity. Due to his parent's jobs and his older siblings' involvement with drugs, Ezekiel took care of himself. In fact, Ezekiel referred to his mom as his “financial supporter” instead of his mom “because there were no motherly moments.” Consequently, he became really dedicated, driven, and motivated by school. Early in his academic career, Ezekiel understood that being able to surpass adversity and be educationally successful required him being able to ask for help,

I was never scared to reach out. So, like in elementary school I became super close with some of the adults [teachers and staff]...I looked for those adults that... had an influence on me and that were close to me, that knew exactly how I was, like my third grade teacher. She was the teacher that really got me into loving education. She's the one that really got me into like books. She went to the library with me and would show me other books that I could read and stuff

By asking for help, Ezekiel was able to develop relationships with people that became invested in his academic success. For example, it was through Ms. Gale that Ezekiel ended up loving education. In his home, Ezekiel did not have anyone that he could go to for help with school. Not only did his parents not show interest in supporting Ezekiel's educational endeavors but neither of them graduated from high school.

Once in high school, Ezekiel continued to develop relationships with people at school. His next mentor was his drama teacher, “She was the one that told me freshmen year when I first displayed any type of problems – she was like, ‘you need to go to college because college is going to be the best thing that happens to you.’” Although Ezekiel was a high school freshmen, it was then that he started to think of college as a possibility, even if it was something that appeared far away. Beyond playing a significant role in his academics, she was also nurturing, caring, and motherly. Ezekiel shared, “that was the thing I didn’t have. I always tried to find the mother in all of my mentors. And I think that’s why I always ran towards the women in my life.” Since his mother was absent throughout a majority of his life and his father was around even less, Ezekiel never had a motherly figure— someone who showed him love and care. Ezekiel described people like his drama teacher as the reason why he stayed motivated and continued with his education.

The importance of mentors continued on to college for Ezekiel. It was then that he met three Latina women whom he referred to as “Ezekiel’s holy trinity.” His holy trinity consisted of women that helped Ezekiel with different aspects of his life, including his academics. With Dr. Mora, Ezekiel was able to relate to at a cultural level, as she understood some of the struggles that he has faced at different points in his life. She also helped Ezekiel come into terms with his Latino identity, which is something that he struggled with prior to starting college. Dr. Ortiz assisted Ezekiel with his life on campus. She connected him with people across the university and motivated Ezekiel when he did not get things that he applied for. She provided him with a level of comfort that he did not get in many other places. Dr. Stone helped Ezekiel get connected with the field of student affairs, an area that he was considering for graduate school. She connected Ezekiel with people across universities and also got him involved with the National

Association of Student Personnel Administrators. In addition, all three women reminded Ezekiel of self care and made him aware that things like crying do not make him a weaker person. In the end, Ezekiel stated that what they all have in common is that they all get to know the real him. Ezekiel also shared that he did not seek out help from men on campus because he felt that masculinity got in the way of things. During his three years of college, Ezekiel had not encountered many men that talked about their emotions or that were empathetic, for example. Consequently, Ezekiel gravitated towards women.

Comparable to Ezekiel, Baltazar also made notable mention of influential women in his life. Baltazar listed women as a protective factor that helped him in different ways. For example, according to Baltazar, women played much more important roles than men in terms of him loving himself, understanding himself, and simply being there as a network of support. Baltazar had a difficult time coming out because he did not know any gay people. The gay people that he knew about were all in high school and Baltazar witnessed them suffering in a variety of ways—from being called “fucking faggots” to getting milk thrown at them and ketchup sprayed on them by male peers. Thus, Baltazar knew that he was not going to come out. That’s precisely when women stepped in to demonstrate their love and care. Women in his life told him things like, “Baltazar, you're worthy of love. I'm going to love you regardless,” referring to his sexuality.

Baltazar moved on to share that he learned all the beautiful things in life through women. They have been the people to show him how to overcome adversity. Baltazar stated,

Being a woman is to be resilient... I think that’s synonymous with it. Because women continually go through shit, especially women of color. And I definitely had a lot of really strong women in my life – of blood and chosen family.

Such women showed Baltazar how to love, showed him care, and showed him what mourning and healing looks like. Additionally, they demonstrated what letting go of unnecessary things looks like and how to do it in healthy ways, “it’s definitely women who put me on that path of self-love. A trillion percent.” Since Baltazar encountered machista men in his life who liked to assert dominance over others, he knew that that was not the kind of guy he wanted to be. Since women demonstrated more loving and nurturing roles, Baltazar not only came to greatly admire women but also developed strong relationship with them.

4.2.4.2 Chosen Family

Participants in this study consistently referred to vulnerabilities they experienced within their family units. For instance, while Ezekiel referred to his mom as his “financial provider” because of her lack of affection and not serving in a motherly role, Saul said that his father controlled everything of his, including his thoughts. Still Drew shared that his mother considered herself and Drew a failure because he was gay. Due to rejection, expectations to fulfill certain roles as men, lack of emotional support, and lack of autonomy to explore their sexualities, among other things, gay Latinos often looked for support outside of their kin. Students referenced the importance of chosen family, which they described as people that serve in family-like roles but that are not blood related. These included friends from school, mentors, fraternity brothers, etc.

When Lupe started college, he acquired a sense of freedom to explore different parts of his identity. Thus, Lupe wanted his family to be more involved in his life. After a friend of his lost his parents, Lupe thought about the relationship he had with his and wished that they knew more about him, including his sexuality, especially since he was significantly more comfortable with being gay by that time. However, Lupe also understood that cultural and societal constraints, such as machismo, and familial expectations to have a wife and kids presented a set

of challenges that made it especially difficult for them to have a strong relationship. Lupe shared, “If I were to die tomorrow, or if they were to pass away tomorrow, we would be two completely different people. They wouldn’t know who I am, and I wouldn’t know who they are.” Since Lupe felt a strong pressure to be the son that his parents wanted him to be and because he was not willing to change who he was, Lupe was okay with his parents never knowing the “real Lupe.”

Fortunately, Lupe had a chosen family that served as a protective factor. Lupe stated, “one thing that I’ve learned being part of the LGBT community is that your blood family isn’t your family. Your blood family doesn’t understand you like the LGBT community... That’s [LGBT family] the closest family I have.” It was through his experiences in college that Lupe managed to develop a network of people that not only he identified with but that were invested in seeing him succeed— both personally and academically. According to Lupe, his chosen family started with five people and eventually grew to about 30 of them.

Because of that [chosen family], I’m more comfortable than ever. I am more open about things than ever because we talk about these issues of how we feel. They are affecting our grades, our school. They are affecting how we pay attention because of how we feel. Because at home we don’t get the validation that we need, so we get it from each other and we’re kind of helping each other. Every single one of them, they’re the greatest fucking people ever. I admire them. I consider them family

When Lupe tried having conversations related to mental health, for example, his family was not open to it. Lupe felt that his familial context did not provide him with the space to discuss his feelings. That was not the case with his chosen family. On the contrary, his chosen family not only encouraged such conversations but also provided emotional support in

processing through difficult topics. Lupe's experiences and identities were validated and accepted among his chosen family.

When Lupe was considering suicide because of his sexuality, it was a member of his chosen family that was there to help. Prior to meeting up with his friend, Lupe described being in a "hole" that he could not get out of and did not have anyone to go to. In fact, Lupe had already thought about how he was going to attempt suicide. Lupe met up with one of his closest friends and shared what he was going through. Since Lupe could not get any words out of his mouth, he shared a sketch that included

things about myself, how I hated myself. It became this whole page filled with words that represented me and my hate for it, and how I loved it. It was almost like a pros and cons list of should I be alive

After looking at the sketch, Lupe's friend started crying and said that she too had undergone similar feelings, as she identified as lesbian. She provided Lupe with unconditional support and told him that everything would be okay. Lupe expressed being grateful for her because he does not think he would be alive if it was not for her. Here, we see a combination of protective factors for Lupe, including drawing and writing and his chosen family. Together they prevented Lupe from committing suicide and also gave him hope that things would be okay.

Comparable to Lupe's experiences, Mariano developed a network of chosen family that continuously provided him with support, especially when faced with adversity. Mariano was able to build a solid group of people through academic and social contexts. Although Mariano had a family, he could not count on them as much as he wished or what he considered other people to count on their respective kin. For such reason, Mariano even spent holidays with his chosen family or on his own. Mariano shared,

For me, my chosen family has been my fraternity brothers, my close friends that I've had for years, or friends that have come into my life. I guess people that have been able to accept me as I am and not try to have me be like performative towards them or towards anyone. I feel those are your real family."

When around his blood family, Mariano was never able to be himself. Instead, he found himself being performative to avoid being ostracized. However, even then was Mariano neglected— to the point that he was kicked out of his home by his parents and nearly killed by his older brother.

Fortunately, Mariano had chosen family that he was able to stay with. One of his college mentors whom he worked with during his first year of college offered him her home. Mariano lived with his mentor, Megan, for a year. "She's definitely an important person. I mean, I would have been out in the street, if it wasn't for her." Moreover, Megan was present during Mariano's graduation. Mariano described his chosen family as being there for him in his time of need. In paying it forward, Mariano has also served in a similar role for others who may need help, including with their coming out process.

4.3 Chapter Summary

Gay Latino men in this study experienced numerous vulnerabilities throughout their lives. At times, such vulnerabilities presented an additional set of challenges. For example, participants discussed that they were often neglected within their families because of their sexuality. The mere fact that participants identified as gay led their families to disregard them, or even kick them out of their home, as was the case for Mariano. Since some participants were mistreated in familial contexts, they resorted to spaces where they felt they would be accepted, such as the

LGBTQ community. While some students found strong networks of support in the queer community, others did not. On the contrary, they mentioned being further marginalized, particularly as a result of a hierarchy based on labeling. Within gay groups there was a lot of emphasis placed on physicality, which often determined the group that people fell under. Some groups were described as being more desirable while others were further subjugated within an already oppressed group. Belonging to more desirable groups meant having access to certain privileges while those in the least desirable did not. In many ways, these notions of hierarchy were a result of heteronormative practices.

Relatedly, gay Latino men also experienced femmephobia as a vulnerability. Those that presented feminine qualities were often viewed as less than and therefore were discriminated against. Due to the stigma attached to being feminine, gay Latinos were pressured and expected to fulfill more masculine roles. Two additional vulnerabilities discussed here included being a gay Latino in the era of Trump and the other involved racialized and homophobic incidents more broadly. Due to Trump being in office, participants worried for their safety due to their racialized queerness, were scared that friends and members of their family would be deported, and experienced anxiety. Trump's presidency led students to be especially cognizant of the spaces they navigated, as they wanted to avoid being attacked. The final vulnerability involved students experiencing racism and homophobia on and off campus. Participants shared that they were constantly under attack because of their identities. They underwent verbal, psychological, and physical attacks.

It is important to note that these vulnerabilities are not the result of students being gay, students being Latino, or the intersectionality of their various identities. Instead, these forms of oppression are products of larger systems of oppression, such as racism, heterosexism,

homophobia, and white supremacy. When intertwined, such systems exacerbated students' experiences.

In overcoming some of the vulnerabilities that students in this investigation were faced with, participants accessed a range of resources. Since many of them shared that they grew up without the opportunity to learn about or explore their sexualities either in home or educational contexts, they had to find ways of doing it. Thus, technology became an imperative resource. It was through Google searches, chat rooms, and YouTube that gay Latinos were able to immerse themselves in gay culture, even if it was to a limited extent. For example, by accessing chat rooms they learned what being gay meant, were able to ask personal questions, and learned about labels in the gay community.

Art, music, and writing served in similar roles as technology. Participants used these three mechanisms to express their feelings and be vulnerable. They were protective factors that were readily available, making them convenient for participants to access. Like technology, art, music, and writing did not require gay Latinos to speak with anyone in person, if they did not want to. That was especially important for students who were not yet out to their family and friends. Education and influential people were also important protective factors. Students described education as an escape from challenges they experienced. It was a constructive outlet that encouraged participants to focus their time and energy on doing well academically. For others, education was a ticket outside of their hometown and outside of the bullying that they may have experienced in elementary and high school. Lastly, participants also talked about chosen family— people that were not blood related but that served in family-like roles. Chosen family was especially helpful for gay Latinos who were rejected within their kin. They became a network of support that empowered the participants to keep pushing forward. It was through

these protective factors that participants developed their resilience and managed to reach a level of hope and happiness. The findings here also demonstrate that there are vulnerabilities and protective factors that have the capability of serving as both, such as education and queer contexts.

5.0 Role of Social Identities in Gay Latino Men's Resilience

I argue that resilience is a dynamic and multilayered process in which people experience positive outcomes despite exposure to adversity. Because I take a critical approach to studying resilience related to participants' social identities, I highlight adversities associated with things such as race/ethnicity, sexuality, and religion, among other things. To be clear, these identities are not the problem nor inherent reasons as to why participants experience adversity. Instead, these identities are connected to larger systems of oppression (e.g. racism, racist nativism, heterosexism, homophobia, white supremacy, etc.) that, in turn, lead to adverse situations. It is very important to note that resilience is not about overcoming *every* single vulnerability or obstacle in an individual's life. Overcoming one form of adversity and not another does not mean that the individual is not resilient. Because systems of oppression were often the source or basis for the vulnerabilities encountered by gay Latino men in this study, it is not easy to deal with or overcome them in their entirety. However, there were certain vulnerabilities that participants strategically managed to overcome or cope with by using and accessing protective factors. It's also important to note that despite the prevalence of systems of oppression, not every single finding was connected to such systems. The ways in which students talked about their identities was not always in relation to racism, homophobia, or patriarchy, for example. There were instances where their identities contributed to their resilience through motivation, familial experiences, or through resistance. At other times, it was through vulnerabilities related to systems of oppression.

In order to adequately illustrate the relationship between participants' social identities and their resilience, this chapter presents six identities that were salient to them. Hence, the research question guiding this chapter is, "How do gay Latino males' social identities influence their resilience?"

The social identities include race/ethnicity, religion, social economic status, undocumented status, gender, and sexuality. These identities are used to showcase the ways that they influence a process of resilience. As previously discussed, resilience is about challenges, vulnerabilities, protective factors, and access to people and resources, among other things. While it may appear that some social identities mostly led to vulnerabilities, it is important to note that vulnerabilities are part of the process of resilience. It also signals the prevalence and intensity of systems of oppression. Since some identities were manifested in vulnerabilities related to systems of oppression, there was not always a direct protective factor to address or overcome the system of oppression. Nonetheless, it is critical that these identities are taken into account when understanding resilience for students of color and gay Latino men in particular. Although there were other social identities that were important to the participants in this study beyond the six listed here, these were some of the most salient. Finally, although I present the social identities separately from one another, there was tremendous overlap between them. For example, participants often talked about sexuality and race/ethnicity or about their low-income identity and their race/ethnicity at the intersection. The participants highlighted here were chosen based on the salience of their identities and to demonstrate heterogeneity in the functioning of resilience within each of the identities.

5.1 Race/Ethnicity

Racial/ethnic identity played an important role in the resilience of participants in the study. While some students used it as a source of motivation to propel their education, others underwent vulnerabilities due to racism and microaggressions they encountered. For Baltazar, his identity as a Latino was salient at an early age, particularly because of his familial context. Baltazar grew up speaking Spanish, primarily outside of school, which led him to equate Spanish to his Latino cultural and ethnic background. Growing up in Los Angeles also played an important role in developing his ethnic identity, “my dad grew up here [Los Angeles] in the '60s, '70s, and '80s, that whole Chicano in L.A. was really and still is ongoing. And so, my dad always used the term "Chicano", like, "You're a Chicano.” At the same time, his mother reminded Baltazar that he was also Puerto Rican. Thus, he became heavily invested in learning and exploring his ethnic identities even more.

Baltazar attended public schools in Los Angeles where he was not only surrounded by other Latina/o students but also where he learned about what it meant to be a Latino in Los Angeles. In his high school years, Baltazar attended a conference where he got the opportunity to see many leaders of the Chicano Walkout Movement⁵, which motivated him to go to college,

I met all these wonderful people from all over L.A.; professionals, academics, and other students like myself. I was really, really, really motivated to go to school – but it gave me a purpose of why I wanted to go to college. Before it was like, "I'm just going to go to college because of what people were telling me to do." After I went to the conference, I was, "Yo, I want to go to college, because I want to meet these people, and I'm looking at

⁵ Series of protests by Chicano students against unequal conditions in the Los Angeles school district.

connecting in their networks, and then I want to continue the legacy of what others have done before me."

Attending the conference gave him a meaningful purpose to pursue a college education. It was no longer the idea of going to college because of messages he received directly. Instead, it was about contributing to a movement and giving back to the Latina/o community.

Additionally, Baltazar became interested in organizing because of his ethnic identity. Since his father was picketing due to work conditions, Baltazar was out there too, "at 12 years old, 13 years old, I was outside picketing with my dad. And so, I became very conscious of labor struggles, and the racial identities associated with them – or, at least, the intersectionality with them." At such young age, Baltazar understood the overlap between being Latino, working class, and labor struggles. He witnessed his parents and grandparents struggling to provide for him and his siblings. As a result, he was able to make connections between the oppression his family faced and their ethnic and working class identities. Due to such upbringing, Baltazar associated struggle with being Latino. In turn, he strongly identified with such struggles and aspired to give back through his education. Overall, Baltazar's racial identity was closer aligned to that of a protective factor, particularly because he recognized the interplay between systems of oppression, which reinforced his Latinidad and motivated him to get an education and give back to his community.

DJ considered his racial/ethnic background as his third most important identity, behind social economic status and his sexual orientation. Although he felt welcomed as a Latino on his college campus, he expressed some issues with other Latinas/os related to his race/ethnicity. DJ described himself as a "pocho," which he defined as someone that is Chicano but does not speak good Spanish. As a result, he shared feeling othered by other Latina/o students on campus who

spoke good Spanish. According to DJ, his campus was very “Chicano centric.” Although that did not bother him in any way, he expressed difficulties that derived from that. For instance, as a third generation Chicano, he felt that he was not accepted or viewed as Latino as other students.

Despite his father’s Mexican background, DJ sensed that he was not perceived as an authentic Mexican due to his mother being white. As a result, DJ avoided accessing campus resources where he would encounter students that viewed him as less Mexican. DJ shared,

I rarely go to Chicano/Latino Student Association. Last year, I rarely went because of how fiercely Chicano it was. If you didn’t speak Spanish, if you didn’t listen to Selena three times a day, only watched Spanish-indie movies, and pop off on conchas⁶ and tacos every single day, then you’re not Mexican enough.

In order to really be considered Chicano, DJ felt that there was an unspoken criterion that was to be met. Moreover, when stepping into such an unwelcoming space, DJ was cognizant of the intersectionality of his identities, “It is an uphill battle every day. I have to deal with not only being Latino, but I have to deal with being queer, and I have to deal with being broke. I can’t just pick one and just argue with people on one of them.” Even among his racial/ethnic community, DJ expressed experiencing racism and classism. DJ described a lot of the Mexicans on his campus as blonde and blue eyed from wealthy backgrounds. Because DJ was not “Mexican enough,” he intentionally avoided making use of the Chicano/Latino Student Association office, even if he wanted to go.

DJ’s resilience was facilitated by utilizing a space where he did not have it “easy” as a Latino. Instead, he considered it a space that he had to “actively navigate, versus a space that I can just be in. And so, it’s a space that sometimes I have to be defensive, or on the attack in,

⁶ Typical Mexican sweet bread.

even though it's supposed to be a safe space." DJ understood that resilience involved adversity and uncomfortability, which he encountered in certain spaces on campus. Due to his identity as a pocho, DJ was aware of the resistance he was faced with. It was under such circumstances that he had to learn to navigate and deal with adversity.

Felipe 's ethnic/racial identity was especially important to him because of the predominantly white contexts that he grew up in throughout his life. He described his home state in the Midwest as a toxic environment. However, it was precisely due to such environment that he grew up aware of his racial/ethnic identity even more intensely. While in college, Felipe recalled going back home for a Cinco de Mayo event that takes place every year in his hometown. Since, according to Felipe, he has always been considered the token in his community, which was predominantly white, he was asked to give a speech to middle schoolers about the importance of a college education. In giving the speech, Felipe switched it up and instead did "Cinco [five] reasons I knew that I was different from everyone around me." Felipe's speech revolved around his Latino identity and racialized incidents he experienced because of it. For example, Felipe shared how he was called a "stupid Mexican" during his middle school years by his peers. Although it was not easy, Felipe used the discrimination he experienced to focus on his academics and prepare himself for college. Such discrimination was tied to racism, as he was viewed as inferior because of his race/ethnicity, but Felipe did not allow it to prevent him from doing well academically. Instead, he used it as a source of motivation, as previous research has shown (Patrón & G.A. Garcia, 2016).

At the time of the interview, Felipe considered his racial/ethnic identity as his most salient one because he continued to inhabit white spaces. Felipe attended a graduate program with a cohort that was overwhelmingly white. Consequently, he felt pressured to constantly have

to provide the Latino perspective, even if he did not feel comfortable speaking about Latinas/os as a pan-ethnic group. Additionally, Felipe felt like he had a strained relationship with one of his professors simply because of his Latino identity intersected with being a gay and a first generation college student.

Due to his experiences growing up, when Felipe thought about his future, he accounted for his multiple identities, including being gay, Latino, and low income, and whether or not they would be welcome in his future job. Together, Felipe felt that his identities and the intersection of them made him resilient, “these identities are what made me resilient... I wouldn’t be resilient if I wasn’t who I was and have the identities that I have now.” Felipe added that his resilience was connected to his identity as a Latino and having parents that migrated from Mexico with four kids and no money. Felipe constantly reminded himself, “if my parents could do this, like if my parents could be resilient then I can too.” By reminding himself of his parents’ struggles, Felipe kept his goals in mind and did not allow barriers related to his Latino identity, or others, get in the way.

5.2 Religion

Religious identity was another identity that was frequently referenced as playing a role in students’ resilience. Often times, religion was discussed in relation to being gay and Latino. During his high school years and transitioning into college, Ezekiel was part of a Christian nondenominational organization. There, was his first time experiencing a “non-broken community...this camp was unlike anything I could ever imagine. Everyone was super nice to each other. People cared for each other. People helped each other out.” Since Ezekiel

experienced a rough childhood as a result of his unhealthy relationship with his mother, heavy drinking in high school, trouble identifying as gay, and suicidal thoughts, Ezekiel yearned for a space where he felt like he belonged. As a result, Ezekiel joined the organization because he wanted to build community, something that he had been deprived of throughout his life, “I wanted it so bad, I wanted a community because it would be a space where I can talk about other things that in my other groups I couldn’t.” Upon joining the religious organization and participating in the summer camp, Ezekiel had a positive experience; one where he felt welcomed, supported, and cared for. In addition, it also served as an introduction to Christianity, which was not something that he grew up with.

Unfortunately for Ezekiel, it was only a matter of time before the dynamic changed within the Christian group. As Ezekiel became more comfortable in the space, he decided to come out to his peers and adult mentors as “not straight,” although he never said he was gay because he knew that it was not allowed. At one point in the summer camp, Ezekiel was called to the side by the organization’s “boss” and told, “if it’s a struggle [his sexuality], then you can continue serving, and we can pray about it together. But you can’t accept it. You can’t accept same sex attraction and still serve here.” Ezekiel’s boss made it clear that he could not be gay and partake in the group. Furthermore, he was told that if he did not agree with the policies in place, that he could find community elsewhere.

Ezekiel described the organization’s vibe as “very privileged white people.” In fact, he said that it was uncommon to see people of color in leadership roles. Thus, he felt that they did not understand the intersectionality of his identities,

Being LGBTQ+ is just one of my many identities I hold that I honestly never think about.

It doesn’t define me, I define it...I’m more than just gay, I’m more than just Mexican,

I'm more than just Christian. I'm a person who just wants to serve others. But like so many others, I am denied that. I would've made one of the best and authentic leaders [in the organization] ever would've had because of how much I can relate to these struggling kids but instead they throw the cookie cutter leaders who have no true experience in what it's like to grow up poor and hungry.

Ezekiel expressed being misunderstood because his peers did not understand the intersectionality of his identities. Upon knowing that Ezekiel was not straight, the organization solely focused on that part of his identity, completely discounting other aspects that were just as important to him. Ezekiel questioned how and why he was introduced to God and developed a relationship with God only to be told that he could no longer be a part of the Christian group because he was gay. For Ezekiel, his religious identity served as both a vulnerability and protective factor. It was a temporary protective factor during a time in which he did not have community, especially coming from a broken community and the absence of a relationship with his mother. On the other hand, it was a vulnerability because of the rejection he faced. Rejection was based on homophobia and heterosexism, as the Christian group did not accept non-heterosexual identities.

Baltazar grew up in a familial environment where religion was very much valued. As a result, Baltazar considered Catholicism his third most important identity, behind race/ethnicity and social economic status. Because Baltazar had a strained relationship with his father since an early age, particularly because of his sexuality, it was through religion that he found a point of connection with his father,

I grew a love for religion because it was a way for me to connect into my father...my Catholicism was something that I really practiced...and that was one of the reasons that I continued to pursue just life in general because growing up, for me, wasn't easy –

especially with my father. I knew I was gay from a very young age. I was very conscious of it... and so was my father. And he would be really mean.

At the age of five, Baltazar was caught getting a kiss from his boy friend that wanted to show Baltazar something he saw his parents doing. Baltazar's father caught them kissing and immediately reprimanded Baltazar. Since then, his father called Baltazar a "faggot" and a "little bitch," among other things. In order to help with their relationship, Baltazar used his religious identity as one way to make up for the tense relationship he had with his father. He used religion as a way to continue pursuing life. It was a motivational factor to which he could devote time and energy.

Baltazar understood that a lot of gay Latino men and queer people more broadly walked away from religion because they felt that it was the principal reason for not being accepted in society, regardless of denomination. However, that was not the case for him. For Baltazar, his religious identity was a direct connection with god that only got stronger with time, especially during his college years, where he attended one of the premier Catholic colleges in the country, "But it was being at [college campus] that I really understood that my God loves me, and my god would never walk away from me, and I wouldn't walk away from my god." Understanding that god loved him regardless of his sexuality and feeling safe because of his Catholicism, led Baltazar to have a strong attachment to his religious identity.

As he transitioned into college, Baltazar believed that Catholic mass and teachings were universal and that therefore people on his campus would have a similar understanding of what that meant. Baltazar stated, "But I realized that I went to a school with a whole lot of Republican conservative Catholics. And to me, to be Catholic and conservative doesn't make sense." Baltazar considered Jesus a revolutionary, who not only immigrated two times but also interacted

with marginalized communities. According to Baltazar, Jesus was from an immigrant-based society, where there were people from different ethnic backgrounds that spoke different languages. Thus, Baltazar understood Jesus as “being against power systems.” Baltazar added,

This is my understanding of what my faith is. I'm supposed to be pro-immigrant, I'm supposed to be anti-power structures that are demeaning to people. When I got to [college], we were in the same church, worshipping the same way, but the way we lived our faith was very different – politically, economically – everything. It was really being in that contrast of people who identified similar to me, but not living similar to me, that I realized, "I need to be here in order to show people that, even though I'm am a deviant in their eyes, I'm still worthy of love."

Baltazar felt that he needed to be in a context with people who were both similar and different to him in order to further develop his religious identity while bringing attention to the intersection of his Latino, gay, and Catholic identities. Baltazar did not think that he would have experienced that “revelation” had he stayed in a community of people who were similar to him.

Along with the relationships he developed with specific professors on campus and the Latino Studies and Anthropology departments, Baltazar considered his Catholicism and relationship with Jesus as systems that he could not have survived without. In fact, he felt that if it was not for those things, he would have dropped out or transferred out. Additionally, Baltazar considered his Catholicism as a motivating factor in his advocacy work. Since he viewed Jesus as a revolutionary who spoke against oppressive powers, he felt that as a Catholic it was his responsibility to continue the same line of work. As a graduate student, he found himself engaging in anti-oppressive work through programming as part of his involvement on campus. While he understood Catholicism as a colonized religion, Baltazar’s concept of Jesus was not

colonized, “my concept of Jesus is very much Baltazar in a de-colonial, Latinx, Catholic-loving way.” Baltazar did not see a clash between his sexuality and his Catholic identity or with Jesus, particularly because of his religious understandings. Ultimately, Baltazar used the intersectionality of his identities as a form of resistance in order to defy preconceived notions about his racialized queerness as a Catholic, particularly those of white people. In this regard, his resistance, strong acceptance of self, and positive understanding of his identities served as protective factors that contributed to his resilience. These things helped him challenge negative perceptions that white Catholics had of him.

Roberto was raised in a Judea-Christian household, where his mom was Christian and his father Jewish. According to Roberto, he was raised religiously Christian and Jewish but culturally Jewish. Due to what he considered to be two competing identities, there were points in his life that Roberto struggled to choose between the “right” one. Roberto attended a Christian Sunday school and when he expressed learning certain teachings with his family, his father would jokingly remind him that Jews had discovered it first, no matter what it was. As a result, Roberto was constantly reminded of the importance of being Jewish. Through the celebration of Jewish holidays, Roberto learned that Jews have been a group that has been continuously persecuted throughout history, “Hanukah, Passover, Purim all are about the annihilation of the Jews. So for me, going through so much, persecution and oppression, the Jewish holidays have that thing I can relate to; being attacked and surviving it.” Throughout his educational trajectory, Roberto expressed experiencing racism, homophobia, physical violence, and death threats. Thus, his religious identity was a strong point of connection with his personal experiences.

While people were not able to tell that he identified as Jewish based on physicality, Roberto often experienced negative reactions when he verbalized his religious affiliation. Due to

stigmatized perceptions about Jews, Roberto was intentional about disclosing his religious identity and asking whether it would be an issue as he approached any relationship, especially a romantic one. Based on the response he received, he would be able to gauge whether the relationship would work or not. Furthermore, Roberto also understood his racial/ethnic identity and sexuality as intersectional with his religion. He was acutely aware that being Jewish only added another layer of oppression.

As a Christian, Roberto felt that there was a clash between his sexuality and his religion. He expressed experiencing more anti-gay remarks from Christians,

I've had religious people come up and tell me I'm going to hell. They were Christian. And being straight you never hear that, and that's rough growing up...I can't describe what that is to have someone who doesn't know you at all just tell you you're going to go to hell.

As a result of being attacked for his sexuality, Roberto was pushed away from Christianity. Although he thought that some Jews were not okay with sexually minoritized people, Roberto did not experience any of them trying to take his rights as a gay person away, whereas he did with Christians.

5.3 Social Economic Status

Social economic status was another identity that played a significant role in the lives of participants in this investigation. For Saul in particular, being low income not only affected his schooling but also the way he viewed himself as a Latino. Growing up, Saul considered television his best friend because his family did not have the financial means to get him and his

sibling involved with extra-curricular activities. On TV, Saul received specific messages about what was deemed worthy of being broadcasted,

The messaging I did receive was, again, very white, very US-centric, very Americanized...TV was my only escape to a world beyond the one that I had in front of me and a lot of the world that I was exposed to was affluent [on TV]. I think it makes sense that that's what I aspired to be or want because that's the only thing that seemed better than what was in front of me.

Saul described growing up in a poor family within a low-income community where people did not have high educational aspirations. The schools he attended "lacked in so many areas," causing the surrounding school districts to perform below average. In addition, Saul was surrounded by hyper masculine spaces that made him uncomfortable. Due to such context, Saul aspired to be closer to what he saw on television, which was a white, Americanized identity.

At the same time, his low-income identity served in a positive and motivational role, and therefore as a protective factor, for Saul to do well in school. Since his mother was a housekeeper, Saul recalled cleaning houses with her during the summer time. He considered cleaning houses in white neighborhoods his summer camp, as his family did not have the financial means to enroll him in an official camp. Saul specifically recalled,

Seeing what they had in comparison to what we had, I had like four shirts and these kids had iPads, laptops and computers, and they'd go to summer camp...I almost got to like for a day, live their life, see what they had...And I remember going to my mom, like, "Mom, I wish I had this. Mom, I wish I had that." She's like, "I know, mijo [son]. It's just that they have the money for it, but one day, you'll have it. You just have to work hard and go to school."

While by cleaning houses, Saul noticed drastic disparities in wealth based on racial/ethnic communities, he also internalized ideas of moving up the social economic ladder if he took the right steps, “it [low-income identity] served that purpose and I didn’t let it further deter me. It more so motivated me.” Knowing that he could not simply go to his mom and ask for whatever he wanted, Saul saw school as a catalyst for having more money and, as a result, the things that he wanted. Simultaneously, he saw education as providing him the financial means to help his family in the future. Unlike his peers at home, which he described as having little educational aspirations, Saul did not allow his low-income identity to deter him from reaching his goals or from developing his resilience.

In specifically reflecting on the hardships he experienced because of his low-income identity, Saul not only talked about receiving a poor education all the way until high school but also the constraints it had on him as a college student. Since his family did not have a lot of money, Saul did not want to ask them for money when he needed it. As a result, Saul worked throughout his undergraduate and graduate career. At the time of the interview, Saul was working close to 40 hours a week in order to be able to pay for school. In the time that he was not working, he said he was doing homework, eating, or doing things to help him recharge in order to be able to keep up with work. Due to his schedule, Saul could not get involved in school as much as he wanted. He considered having to work in order to be able to pay for school as a hindrance to maximizing his educational aspirations. If he did not have to work, Saul said he “would have an internship. I would be doing a research. I’d be working closer to faculty. I would be showcasing my talents, but my talents aren’t being showcased in the way that I wish I could.” Even though Saul considered himself a thinker and a doer, he said he did not have the opportunities to fully take advantage of those qualities because of his financial state.

Interestingly, Saul's story demonstrates an ongoing form of resilience. While being low-income presented a set of challenges throughout his childhood, he continued to persist, resist, and be resilient up to this point. Even though he was still affected by his social economic status, Saul actively used such identity to move forward in his education.

For Roberto, having an acute understanding of race and racism, homophobia, and other systems of oppression made his social economic status identity more discernable. According to Roberto, his family's social economic status played an important protective role, particularly in accessing resources that facilitated and created opportunities for him, but it did not exempt him from experiencing other vulnerabilities. Roberto considered that there were things that money could simply not prevent from happening, regardless of how much money he or his parents have had. He felt that his two most salient identities— being Latino and gay— were constantly under attack and that there was no way that he could escape experiencing different forms of oppression, even if his family had money.

As a Latino, Roberto felt that he was always assumed and perceived as being poor, regardless of how much money he did or did not have. Due to stigmatized societal portrayals of Latinos, he felt that he was viewed in a singular, universal kind of way, which often resulted in being viewed as less than. Roberto stated,

For me, socioeconomic status did not save me from racism. It doesn't save me from homophobia. It doesn't save me from being bullied. It doesn't save me from being attacked. It doesn't save me from discrimination. It didn't save me from having other bad things happen to me. It just didn't. So, while money definitely gives opportunities in a lot of ways, there are some things that it just doesn't save you from.

As described in the previous chapter, Roberto was heavily bullied throughout his education. Although he described his parents as having some money, not once did it prevent him from being choked, kicked, and punched; being called a faggot or a spic; or from having little to no friends.

Roberto described growing up with rich classmates, which made him think he was poor. With time, he realized that he was not poor by any means but that his family's wealth was not as high as that of his peers. Due to his family's finances, Roberto was able to occupy the same spaces as rich students in his schools, including K-12 and college. Accordingly, Roberto was able to afford going to a prestigious liberal arts college and things that he generally wanted to be involved with, such as playing instruments, acting, horseback riding, and karate. Roberto considered that if it was not for his family's financial status, he would not have had the aforementioned opportunities, which he described as being an integral part of his development as a student and a person. His social economic status had components of both vulnerabilities and protective factors. In Roberto's view, having money did not protect him from being physically and verbally attacked. Still, it provided him with academic opportunities and resources that he would have otherwise been deprived of.

Dave considered his social economic status as his most important identity at the time of the interview. He attributed its salience partially due to the upbringing he experienced in his household throughout his childhood. Dave described his parent's financial status as both "humble" and "low income." Although his father worked hard to support their family, he struggled a lot. Due to the financial constraints he and his family experienced, Dave considered his social economic status as a priority in order to not only be better off at an individual level but also to give back to his family. In order to reach that point, Dave understood that there were things that he needed to do, particularly around his education. He shared, "I'm focusing on my

academics, getting my degree, progressing in my career. That to me is the number one important thing right now.” Dave expressed that he knew what it was like to struggle and to have a family that tried to support him as best they could, even if it did not always work out the way his family wanted it to. For those reasons, Dave felt strongly about dedicating time and effort into his academics, as it was one way of moving up the social economic ladder.

Growing up, Dave was cognizant of his family’s social economic status because he compared his family’s situation to that of his cousin’s. Dave recalled wanting what they had, including clothes, and not having the money to purchase them. Knowing that his family could not provide the things his cousins had, Dave thought, “it really pushed me really hard to focus on school, and to get my degree because I wanted to have that kind of lifestyle.” As Dave got older he realized that he did not want to have money in order to have access to material things. Instead, he saw it as a way to live comfortably and help those around him. Ultimately, Dave considered his social economic status to contribute to his resilience by motivating him to get an education, which, in turn, would inadvertently allow him to help others.

5.4 Undocumented Status

Although there were not any participants that identified as undocumented at the time of the interview, many of them talked about living in mixed-status households. Consequently, undocumented status was constantly cited as an identity that was central to their experiences. As such, this identity in particular was talked about in the form of a vulnerability. Saul was born and raised in a poor family in rural and agricultural area in central California. While he was born in

the United States, his parents both migrated from Mexico, causing a lot of fear among his family due to their undocumented status,

A lot of my experience as a Mexican American, first-generation Latino stem from living in a mixed-status household, where from an early age, my sister and I were both kind of conditioned to understand that this was a possibility to where our parents would be removed and taken away. So, we had to be ready for that and understand that that was our reality and our normal. From a very early age my identity as a child of undocumented immigrants was very salient. And I don't think I took the time to really understand or dissect what that did to my emotional and mental state until I took the time to kind of unpack that and get under that in my later years and in my later adolescence.

For Saul, his identity as the child of undocumented parents was very salient throughout his life. Saul's family lived their lives around the idea and possibility that both his mother and father could be deported at any moment. In fact, Saul's family had conversations about what he and his sister would do in case his parents were deported.

Because the possibility of his parents being deported was a real one, Saul's family, including extended kin, had a system in place that partially helped them navigate their daily doings. Saul's family always had to think about whatever they were going to do, no matter how small or large of an activity,

Whenever we were out in the neighboring city, our aunts were always good about calling us when there was a checkpoint⁷. Anytime there was a checkpoint, we would always receive multiple calls from our cousins or aunts or whatever. Like, 'There's one here,

⁷ The operating of regular and tactical checkpoints throughout the country where motorists can be stopped and required to verify their residence status.

there's one here. Where are you? Are you home? If not, he [uncle] needs to come get you.'

In order to avoid, or at least decrease, the possibility of deportation for Saul's parents, his extended family was constantly on the lookout for any checkpoints. For these reasons, Saul lived a confined childhood with little opportunities to explore life and educational possibilities. While Saul understood deportation as a probability, he also felt that his father used that as an excuse to prevent him and his sister from making their own decisions. In addition, Saul was tasked with being a translator for his parents whenever there were immigration related documents in English involved. Saul recalled being frustrated to help with the translation because he did not understand legal jargon as an 8-10 year old.

Aside from worrying about deportation, Saul was "shunned" and viewed as "less than" by peers at school for having undocumented parents, had trouble filling out his FAFSA application due to his parents not having a social security number, and was constrained in applying to colleges. Saul shared, "I knew I needed to stay in California because my mom's like, 'We can't take you beyond that and we can't like cross the border.' They didn't want me to go anywhere too close to the border." Saul was given specific geographic parameters in terms of colleges and universities that he could and could not apply to. Fortunately for Saul and his family, his parents became U.S. residents during his college years.

Similarly, DC experienced vulnerabilities because of his parent's undocumented identities. Although he was young and did not quite understand the functioning or importance of American citizenship, it was something that he "felt" through his parent's experiences. DC stated, "when I was young, I definitely felt the anxiety that my parents felt." While growing up, DC's mother worked at a factory. During one particular instance, his mother's factory was

ambushed by “la migra” [immigration enforcement] and so his mother had to hide in a large refrigerator to avoid “la migra” from taking her.

While in his graduate years, there were instances in the classroom in which DC had to talk about his experiences as the child of undocumented immigrants. This was especially the case when his privileged classmates and professors made comments about Trump that undermined the experiences of marginalized communities of color. In referring to one of his professor’s, DC shared, “as a white woman, privileged white woman, upper class; that’s her upbringing. I’m like, ‘I don’t think you quite understand what it’s like to be a child of undocumented immigrants.’” DC had to engage in discussions that not only sought to educate people in his classrooms but also recall instances where he experienced fear and anxiety over his parent’s undocumented status.

Since DC’s parents were undocumented, there were also occasions where their employers took advantage of them. At times, DC’s parent’s employers decided not to pay them simply because they were undocumented. As undocumented people, there was not much that his parents could do about not getting paid. This made their family’s financial situation especially difficult because his family was already poor. DC described his family’s financial situation as living “paycheck to paycheck.” Comparable to DC’s parents not getting paid, there was one particular instance where their landlord tried suing DC’s family by saying that they had not paid rent. DC stated, “one of the landlords basically sued my parents because she thought that she could easily take advantage of them and say that my parents didn’t pay the rent and therefore sued them, scared them, and called la migra.” DC moved on to say that fortunately his parents always paid rent with a check and so they had receipts for every payment they made. When it came to the actual court date, the landlord did not even show up. In addition, DC mentioned the anxiety he

and his family experienced every time his father drove to work, as the possibility of him being stopped by police was there. Even though he did not fully understand everything that was going on as a child, he knew that something was happening. According to DC, such experiences still affect him today, as feelings of being othered and not being viewed as equal still persist. Having undocumented parents manifested itself as a vulnerability for DC through familial hardships, particularly fear for deportation and being financially taken advantage of. Due to familial adversity growing up, DC was still affected by the time of the interview.

Although Jairo was a U.S. citizen by the start of the interview process, that was not always the case. Jairo was born in Mexico where he spent the first ten years of his life. Transitioning into living in the United States and the educational system was not easy for him. Jairo attended public schools in Southern California, which he described as spaces where teachers did not show much support. Even though Jairo was aware of his identity as an undocumented student, he always had college education as a goal. In order to achieve his goal, Jairo did things to make it happen. For example, Jairo quickly learned English and did well in all of his middle school and high school classes. In fact, he advocated for himself in order to be placed in AP courses. Jairo stated,

I knew that education was major for me and I decided to enroll in honor classes and say, “Hey, I want honors classes. Hey, I want AP classes.” And even through 12th grade I was in AP classes. I always wanted to like keep learning. And so knowing that I was undocumented, and I couldn’t get financial aid, I thought, “Oh, then I’m screwed.” And I didn’t know what to do. And I thought that I was going to have to settle for community college.

Jairo knew that in order to make the most of his high school education he had to advocate for himself. However, it came to a point where he felt he could not do much more because of his undocumented identity.

Fortunately, one of his friends encouraged him to apply to a 4-year college. Jairo was accepted and so he decided to attend. However, going to college required his mom to sell their home in Mexico, especially since he could not apply for FAFSA. Because Jairo described his financial situation as poor, there were some quarters in the school year in which he had to miss because his family did not have the money to pay for school. Due to financial constraints, Jairo did not have money to purchase glasses although he needed them. Instead, he used to sit in the front of the class and would have to “squint” his eyes in order to see what his professors were writing on the front board. Even though Jairo wanted to attend a 4-year school, he also wanted the opportunity to go out of state, which did not happen, “Ideally, I wanted to move out of state, go to a university, and go into dorms. But my legal status – my undocumented status didn’t help. So, I had to stay here [California], and live at home.” In the end, Jairo was restricted from going to a university of his choice; did not receive financial aid, which prolonged graduation; and experienced hardships through his family’s financial situation. For Jairo, being undocumented for a majority of his life presented a set of academic vulnerabilities. Not only was he not able to apply for FAFSA, leading his mom to sell her house, but he also could not apply to the out of state schools that he wanted.

5.5 Gender

Even though a majority of participants understood that as men they were granted privileges over women, being a man was not an identity that was necessarily important to them. The lack of importance was not surprising given that dominant identities tend to be less salient. Gender became most salient when it intersected with participants' Latino identity and when situated within familial contexts. Even then, their gender identity mostly served as a vulnerability. Early in his childhood, Lupe received messages about the ways he needed to behave because of his gender. He knew that there were certain practices that he had to abide by as a man,

You hear it in every Latino family, whenever something affects you emotionally, you have to 'portarte como un hombre' [behave like a man]– don't cry. Because 'hombres no lloran [men don't cry].' And so, from that beginning point, masculinity is already being shoved in your face without you even realizing it. Without them [family] even realizing it. Because they're doing what they've been taught to do.

For Lupe, gender expectations were deeply engrained in Latina/o families to the point that pressures to fulfill certain roles were only passed from one generation to the next. As a result, men were not allowed to cry or show any sign of weakness, as they would be viewed as less of a man.

When Lupe initially started thinking about his sexuality, he realized that it would be complicated to express it because he was man. Lupe considered Latino culture to prevent men from talking about their dreams, hopes, and fears. Instead, conversations were supposed to be about securing a job, getting a wife, and being able to sustain their families. Those were precisely the messages Lupe received as he was growing up. In fact, he was encouraged to find a

manager level position somewhere and start a family. Since his parents did not understand how college worked, getting a college education was not even an option in their eyes. Because Lupe was well aware of his family's expectations of him, he was "mortified and afraid" about being gay. Lupe questioned why that happened to him, whether he could get fixed, and what his mom would think, especially since he was the oldest son. As the oldest, Lupe was expected to be a positive example for his siblings, which he felt he could not do because of his sexuality.

Moreover, Lupe expressed hating being Latino because "being Latino doesn't allow me to express my emotions. Being Latino doesn't allow me to write about the things that I feel. The worst part is that being Latino is passing that same mindset down to your next generation." Lupe added that he was taught not to ask for help, even when needed, because it was frowned upon, as "los hombres no piden ayuda [men don't ask for help]." Consequently, Lupe's academics suffered while he also experienced anxiety and health issues in school. To make matters worse, Lupe suffered from depression and experienced suicidal thoughts, since he felt that he could not be gay as a Latino man. Lupe's experiences were influenced by patriarchy, homophobia, and heterosexism. His family had strict expectations of Lupe as a man, preventing him from talking about his dreams and hopes, crying whenever he wanted, asking for help, and expressing any emotions. Additionally, as a man, Lupe felt that he could not express his sexuality, as any identity that was not heterosexual was not accepted. Ideals of gender and gender roles proved to be a vulnerability for Lupe.

For Dave, learning what it meant to be a man was something that was indirectly taught at home throughout his childhood. Dave shared, "I grew up in a family where it was very heteronormative. They said, 'if you're a man, you have to beat the woman' and that's just the normal way of doing things." Dave learned the behaviors that he was supposed to engage in as a man

based on observation at home, where his family engaged in specific gender roles for men and women. Because Dave was taught that as a man he was supposed to like women, there was a time when he was confused about his sexual orientation. In attempting to fit within his family's conceptions of what it meant to be a normal man, Dave thought he was transgender, "I was like well, 'if a female has to be with a male, therefore I must be female in order to have sexual desires for a man.'" To him, it did not make sense that he had feelings for other men, since that was not the way gender roles he learned worked. For that reason, Dave thought he was a woman for some time. Thus, he felt like he had to fulfill a feminine role, particularly because women in his family were feminine. According to gender constructs he experienced at home, Dave understood that two men could not have sexual or emotional connection to one another. As he got older, Dave realized that he was not transgender but that he was gay.

In the same thread, Dave was taught that the oldest man in the family had to be the patriarch of the household, which he felt was going to be his role at some point. However, because he was gay, he thought that the possibility of him being someone respectable and head of the home was not possible. Dave thought, "being gay kind of discredited everything in terms of me being a man, everything." Consequently, Dave repressed his sexuality. In fighting his gay identity, Dave subscribed to a 'machista' mentality, reflective of that of his father's. Dave engaged in behavior that oppressed gay people, "I tried very hard to project that kind of machista attitude. So, as a result, I wasn't the nicest person to people who were gay." Dave recalled one particular instance when one of his guy classmates in high school asked him to prom in front of his peers before Dave was out. Dave responded by saying "I'm not like you" and pushed him away.

In another instance, Dave had a friend who he started bullying as soon as he found out his friend was gay. Dave shared,

In a way, it was me projecting what I hated about myself onto other people. That derived from this machista ideology that you have to be a certain type of way. Therefore, since I have to fit that criteria, then I must make people who don't fit that criteria feel bad about themselves because I feel bad about myself.

According to Dave, the machista ideology he displayed came from his father. Dave was simply practicing the things he learned about what it meant to be a man. Since he was not able to outwardly show his true identity, he felt that others should not be able to do so either. Dave said he was jealous and envious of how proud and open some of his gay peers were. He added, "I wanted to be like that. And so, why not make someone feel bad about something that you wish you could be." Dave faced an internal battle between wanting to be as brave and free as his gay classmates and pretending to be a straight man. Again, here we see the role of patriarchy and heterosexism for Dave. His family had strict gender roles for men and women, leading him to learn and embody those characteristics— to the point that he became the oppressor for some time. Because Dave could not publicly display his sexuality, he assumed a heterosexual role where he not only displayed homophobia against his gay peers but also against himself.

Similar to Dave, Felipe also talked about growing up with a machista father, leading him to challenges related to his expected gender roles. Felipe described his father as the stereotypical machista Latino dad that practiced strict gender roles for men and women. Any time that Felipe engaged in behavior that was not manly or that his father did not approve of, Felipe was reprimanded for it. For instance, Felipe remembered, "my dad yelling at me when I was hanging out with the girls in the living room and not with the guys in the kitchen, drinking." As a man,

Felipe was automatically expected to engage in male behavior, such as hang out with the guys, drink, and simply avoid doing anything that resembled feminine characteristics. This was unfortunate for Felipe because he felt more comfortable around women ever since he was a little kid, including his teachers and peers at school. With women, Felipe did not have to behave in any particular way to be accepted. For these reasons, Felipe avoided going to men for help, even while in college, as he felt he needed to present in certain ways in order to be accepted.

For Felipe, avoiding feminine behavior was difficult because he was feminine as long as he could remember. As a child, Felipe expressed wanting his ears pierced because he saw his sisters doing it. As soon as his dad found out that Felipe wanted to get piercings, he told him “te voy a mochar los huevos [I’m going to cut your balls off] if you ever get that done.” Additionally, his father went as far as telling Felipe that he would disown him if he got the piercings he wanted. At another point, Felipe decided to let his hair grow out in order to comb it in a man bun. When his hair became noticeably long, his father “bitched” him out while questioning him, “do you want to be a woman? Why do you want your hair long?” For Felipe’s father, there were certain things that men did not do and letting their hair grow was one of them. Despite having a machista father, Felipe still behaved in feminine ways, as that was what came naturally for him. He said that it was exhausting for him to pretend to be something he was not. It was mostly when he was around his father that Felipe slightly changed his behavior. According to Felipe, being a gay Latino man meant that he had to learn to navigate challenging spaces, particularly those that were masculine dominated. Without experiencing these challenges, among others, Felipe did not believe that he would be as resilient as he was at the time of the interview.

5.6 Sexuality

While there were few participants that considered their sexuality as their most salient identity, an overwhelming majority spoke about the ways that their sexual orientation influenced their lives and resilience in one way or another. Often times, participants expressed the intersectionality between being gay with other identities that were important to them, such as gender, race/ethnicity, and social economic status. When specifically talking about being gay and their resilience, they referred to vulnerabilities they encountered. Given large systems of oppression, such as heterosexism and patriarchy, it was no surprise that sexuality was often situated within different forms of adversity.

Ian started experiencing same-sex attractions between the ages of 5-6. At that time, Ian did not associate anything good or bad with having an attraction for boys. On the contrary, he thought it was something normal. Since he did not receive any messages about sexuality, he did not make much of it. It was only within certain contexts that sexuality became salient for Ian, especially as he got older. Due to a rough childhood because of his responsibilities taking care of his brother, being sexually abused, and living in a single parent household, Ian became involved with gangs during his high school and college years, as they provided him with care and affection. It was in the gang that Ian's sexuality became important for him. According to Ian, one of the reasons for joining the gang was because he secretly had crushes on a lot of the guys.

By the time Ian joined, he was thinking more intensely about his sexuality. Still, he knew that it was something he could not disclose to his gang because being gay was not something that was accepted. In concealing his sexuality, Ian stated, "I kept it [sexuality] to myself and did everything that I could to not come off as being gay. I dressed as they dressed, first of all. I started wearing baggy pants, chains, white t-shirts, and the hats." By dressing and acting as they

did, Ian tried to downplay his sexuality. He felt that if he engaged in similar behavior as his gang members, then he would not have to worry about them thinking he was gay. Furthermore, Ian said he also adopted the mannerisms used by gang members, he became more sociable, and also got girlfriends. Although he expressed being “miserable and insecure” in the three relationships he had with girls, he knew that it was another way of him being accepted while decreasing the possibility of people thinking he was gay. Ian was deliberate about keeping his sexuality hidden because he did not want to get beaten up. In referring to his sexuality, Ian shared, “I was afraid of getting not only bullied, I was afraid of getting beaten up.” To avoid that, Ian suppressed his sexuality as long as he could.

As a result of his gang involvement, Ian ended up in prison after shooting someone. Prison was an additional context where his sexuality was at the forefront. When serving his time, Ian expressed being scared, mainly because of his sexuality,

It was crazy. I was scared at first because of my own sexual orientation. I was afraid of being around so many dudes. I thought something would happen to me.... but, it was crazy because that's when I actually had become part of the Sureño clique. Being a Sureño means that you're strictly linked with the Mexican Mafia.... for sure, it meant that I couldn't talk about myself and about my orientation, even though, there were a lot of guys that I was attracted to.

Being surrounded by guys that Ian was attracted to made it especially difficult for him to be in jail. Ian clearly understood that being part of a gang meant that he could not be gay. He stayed in the closet as a way of protecting himself. After being released from prison and transitioning into college, Ian continued to encounter discrimination because of his identities. In fact, Ian stated that he experienced more racism and microaggressions than his peers because of his

intersectionality. Being Latino, Black, gay, and formerly incarcerated made it especially difficult. There were instances when his classmates avoided sitting next to him because he was a gay male of color.

For Sergio, being gay was an important identity throughout his middle school and high school years but not one that he could verbalize, let alone explore. While at home his mother frequently asked him about having girlfriends his peers at school pressured him to get one. Growing up, Sergio heard his parents talk about homosexual people on television, specifically in a jokingly way. Because the connotation was a negative one, Sergio felt that it was not right for him to express to them who he was. In school, Sergio faced a similar challenge, as he was pressured to fulfill a specific role; one that aligned with the masculinity that was displayed among his peers. This meant that he had to hide his sexuality and pretend to like girls.

Sergio was a part of the football team in high school, which he described as an outlet but with a huge downside, “it was a space where masculinity was always challenged, and like, the whole idea of being homosexual was so absurd, and not a thing not to be.” Sergio was confused by the dynamic displayed by his teammates because it was not allowed to be gay but his peers engaged in what he described as “homosexual acts.” For instance, his peers would play a game where they would pretend to kiss one another, slap each other’s butts, dry hump, and pretend like they would give each other oral sex. As a result, Sergio was confused about what was going on. Still, he felt like he had to keep his sexuality hidden. In doing so, he got a girlfriend, although it was something that he was not happy about.

After some time, Sergio grew tired of being in the closet, so he decided to take a step forward with his sexuality. Before coming out to his parents, Sergio talked about being depressed because he was gay, particularly not being able to be who he really was. Since he knew the time

would come to disclose his sexuality to his kin, Sergio mentally and financially prepared himself for what was to come. At the time, Sergio was in college and had been working in order to save up some money. He had enough saved up to live on his own for at least half a year. Sergio expressed being prepared for the worst. Based on his prior experiences with his family and the overall stigma attached to being gay, including in school, Sergio thought that the possibility of him being kicked out of his home was very likely.

When Sergio decided to come out to his parents, he could not stop crying, even before he said anything to them. Sergio recalled telling his mother that he did not like girls and his mom questioning, “what do you mean?” Based on her tone, Sergio felt that she meant it in a critical way, as in she could not believe it. His mom proceeded to cry while asking him whether he had tried being with girls. On the other hand, Sergio’s father had the opposite response,

I can't hate you for who you are. I have gone through so many things in my life, like my dad treated me like shit; how could I ever do that to you based on you are? You're still my son, and I love you.

Sergio was happy to hear his father’s acceptance, support, and love for him, especially since it was something that he did not expect. Since then, Sergio developed a stronger relationship with his father. Although Sergio and his dad did not show much physical affection for one another prior to him coming out, they started hugging and giving each other a kiss on the cheek. According to Sergio, it was his Mexican culture that prevented men from showing more affection.

For Guillermo, sexuality was his second most important identity. Still, it was an identity that he was in the process of figuring out what it meant for him at the time of the interview. Guillermo attended a catholic school throughout his education. It was then that he started

receiving messages about gender and sexuality. Specifically, Guillermo felt as if he did not belong in his school because he felt that his identities did not coincide with one another, particularly being Latino, gay, and Catholic. As a result, Guillermo began having deep conversations with himself about the feelings he was experiencing. He told himself that the feelings related to being gay were simply a phase and that he would soon get over them. Guillermo reminded himself that he would marry a woman, as that was what was expected of him as a Catholic. Due to such feelings, there were instances that Guillermo felt unwelcome in the church.

With time, his sexual identity was something that Guillermo heavily thought about, to the point that he was uneasy. During family road trips, Guillermo recalled experiencing anxiety and panic attacks in his sleep because of the thought of being gay and his future. He questioned what his aunts would think of him. Similarly, there were times when Guillermo could not concentrate in school because his mind was consumed by thoughts related to his sexuality. Guillermo shared,

I'm studying for like an algebra test and then I'm like 'holy shit you're gay,' and you're just hearing that in your ear while you're taking a test and it just creates this anxiety. I think that anxiety fostered into my education.

Due to these experiences, Guillermo felt that his academics were affected. He could not find a way to stop thinking about his sexuality, even if he wanted to. Guillermo referred to taking the SAT⁸ as the worst time that he experienced an intense internal questioning about his sexuality. Specifically, he recalled losing focus on the essay portion of the test.

Guillermo had negative preconceived notions about the way he was going to be perceived by his family and peers for being gay whenever he decided to come out to them. To his pleasant

⁸ Standardized test used for college admissions.

surprise, they were both completely accepting. Guillermo realized that many of the ideas he had in his head were simply things that he had formulated and not necessarily a result of signs he had received from family and college friends that may have signaled that they would not accept and support his sexuality. During his college years, Guillermo was part of a male group designed to help with the retention and graduation rates of males of color on campus. Despite serving as vice president at the time, Guillermo considered quitting because he felt that if his peers found out he was gay they would think that he was only in the organization to hit on them. Upon coming out to them, he was completely accepted and supported by everyone. At the time of the interview, Guillermo was still doing the work of becoming fully comfortable with his sexuality.

5.7 Chapter Summary

Similar to the vulnerabilities that gay Latino men experienced in relation to their resilience in the previous chapter, there were several social identities that played a significant role in the adversity and protective factors they underwent. The six identities discussed here included race/ethnicity, religion, social economic status, undocumented status, gender, and sexuality. Unfortunately, the resilience was, for the most part, manifested in the form of vulnerabilities. This should in no way discount the experiences or resilience of gay Latino men. Instead, it is simply a part of the process. At the same time, it demonstrates the significant role and intensity of systems of oppression.

This is not to say that all six identities discussed here are strictly tied to vulnerable experiences, as there were certainly instances in which the identities led to positive outcomes. Interestingly, however, it was not the social identity that directly led to positive outcomes.

Instead, it was the social identity leading to a vulnerability, which then motivated the participant to want to do well, for example, leading to their resilience. It's important to highlight that someone can only be considered resilient in relation to a vulnerability. As such, there were numerous vulnerabilities connected to social identities that were connected to systems of oppression that gay Latino men in this investigation had to constantly navigate. In fact, participants constantly mentioned that without the vulnerabilities they experienced related to their social identities, they would not have been resilient. For instance, in discussing his racial/ethnic identity, Felipe stated that he would not have been resilient had it not been for the intersection of his race/ethnicity, sexuality, and low-income status. These identities led to challenges, which he then had to learn how to successfully navigate.

In discussing the role and importance of their social identities on their resilience, gay Latinos also talked about their family's undocumented status, which was an identity that they did not directly possess but that was significant in the things they experienced. Living in undocumented households led participants to experience anxiety, fear, and educational limitations. Similarly, social economic status presented a set of limitations in relation to the types of schools participants were able to apply to and attend. For Roberto in particular, having money provided him with resources that only strengthened his academic profile. However, money did not exempt him from racism, homophobia, and being physically attacked. In talking about their religious identity, participants talked both about the vulnerabilities they underwent, especially in relation to their sexuality, as well as the motivation and desire to educate others on what it meant to be a Christian Latino. Religion was often perceived as an identity that did not positively coincide with being gay.

Gender and sexuality were two other identities that participants considered important and as influencing their resilience. As Latinos, participants talked about cultural constraints that shaped gender expectations and that sought to prevent them from identifying as gay, as it was something that was not accepted. For Guillermo, however, his family and friends were extremely supportive of his sexuality. Ultimately, it is important to highlight that participants overwhelmingly talked about their identities at the intersection instead of on an individual basis. For instance, it was difficult for participants to talk about sexuality without making some reference to their gender. Since gay Latinos do not live one-dimensional lives, it made sense that their identities intersected significantly.

6.0 Discussion and Conclusion

In this investigation I employed a resilience framework to better understand the process of resilience that gay Latino male collegians undergo as it relates to the social identities that are most salient to them. At the same time, I sought to reveal the vulnerabilities and protective factors that are pertinent to their lives while challenging and expanding the theoretical underpinnings of a resilience framework. As such, I begin this chapter by proposing an expansion and redefining of theoretical notions of resilience based on the data that was collected and presented in chapters four and five. The proposed definition accounts for systems of oppression, which highlights a level of criticality that was absent in prior conceptualizations of resilience. I then discuss the vulnerabilities and protective factors that are particularly relevant to Latino gay men, demonstrating how the findings align with, diverge, contest, and contribute to the existing body of research. After discussing my findings, I offer four conclusions about resilience and gay Latino men in college solely based on this investigation. I conclude by offering implications for practice and future research, both within and beyond the boundaries of education.

6.1 Expanding and Redefining Notions of Resilience

Despite several decades of research, resilience remains a contested topic— both in terms of its meaning and what is considered resilience. Because resilience is not confined to one discipline, some believe that it originated from psychology while other researchers believe it has

its most accurate meaning in physics and material sciences (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). Traditionally, resilience has been used to refer to individuals who are successful in overcoming different forms of adversity throughout their lives. Although significantly different in meaning, resilience is often used interchangeably with resiliency. While some researchers have used resiliency to indicate a personality trait (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Wagnild & Young, 1993), others have used resilience to refer to a process (Luthar et al., 2000; Patrón & G.A. Garcia; 2016; Rutter, 1990; Rutter, 2012; Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). When using resiliency as a personality trait, researchers inadvertently suggest that it is a trait that someone is born with; meaning that they either have it or they do not. If they do not possess it, it is implied that they cannot become resilient. From this standpoint, sole responsibility is placed on an individual to overcome a specific form of adversity, discounting the role of larger systems.

Throughout this study, I center the resilience and experiences of racially and sexually minoritized people, particularly Latino men, whom have been reduced to “statistics, variables, and the use of questionnaires” in social science research (Abalos, 2002, p. 48). I intentionally deviate from the utilization of resilience and resiliency to refer to a personality trait that is solely measured by scales and questionnaires, as resilience is not a dichotomous construct that is based on “yes” and “no” responses, especially not for minoritized people who continually have to negotiate their identities. Instead, I use resilience to refer to a process that occurs over an indefinite period of time and that is connected to an individual’s access to resources, salience of their social identities (e.g. race/ethnicity, sexuality, religion), and that is overall situated within large systems of oppression. More specifically, I propose the following definition of resilience:

A dynamic, multilayered process occurring over an indefinite period of time in which individuals undergo adversity related to their social identities (e.g., race, sexuality,

gender, social economic status, undocumented status, and religion), which are inextricably linked to systems of oppression, and manage to successfully overcome and/or cope with the adversity.

Here, I call for researchers and educators to be more precise in their utilization of such terminology, especially when conducting research with minoritized populations, as it can have unintended consequences when working with these populations. Furthermore, if researchers intend to work with resilient minoritized populations of color, there must minimally be a consideration of the intersectionality of their identities and systems of oppression.

At the core of a resilience framework is adversity, as one cannot be resilient if there are no vulnerabilities in place. However, larger systems of oppression, such as racism, homophobia, heterosexism, and xenophobia, have been significantly overlooked in resilience literature. With this study I sought to specifically explore these systems in order to propose a new conceptualization of resilience. This is because there has been a lack of consideration of minoritized peoples' most important social identities. Although resilience frameworks, and resilience literature more broadly, does not prohibit discussions on race, sexuality, and undocumented status, among other things, such topics are rarely or ever a part of the conversation, much less the intersectionality of their identities and their situating within systems of oppression. If resilience is concerned with vulnerabilities, there *must* be a concerted effort to account for such components, especially when working with minoritized groups of people. Researchers can no longer rely on conceptions of resilience that are based on white people and their experiences, as they have been race neutral, thereby becoming oppressive in nature.

Even though resilience literature has consistently used the word, “risks” or “risk factors” when discussing environmental issues that place people in potential danger (Morales & Trotman,

2010), I am purposeful about not using these terms. Instead, I opt for the utilization of the term, “vulnerabilities,” as there is nothing inherently risky about the social identities that participants in my study discussed. Being gay, for example, is not necessarily a risk; although it becomes a vulnerability when accounting for things such as patriarchy, heterosexism, and homophobia, as these systems oppress people who are not heterosexual, whether in identity or in performance. I only use the terms, “risks” and “risk factors” when referencing previous literature. While I acknowledge and understand that poverty, parental divorce, parental mental illness, lack of parental care, growing up in an abusive home, war, substance abuse, premature birth, and inferior schools are noteworthy risks (Denny, Clark, Fleming, & Wall, 2004; Luthar, 1991, Masten, 2001, 2014; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Morales & Trotman, 2010), I encourage resilience researchers to consider other vulnerabilities, such as those highlighted here.

Equally important to resilience are protective factors, which are things that help ameliorate the effects derived from vulnerabilities. It is critical to understand that protective factors do not have to be a direct response to specific vulnerabilities, as some vulnerabilities do not have a simple solution or linear way of being dealt with. This became apparent with participants in this study, as highlighted in chapters four and five. Since some social identities are manifested as vulnerabilities and related to systems of oppression, there is not always a direct or clear protective factor to address or overcome the system of oppression. Nonetheless, it is critical that these identities are considered when understanding resilience for minoritized populations, particularly students of color and gay Latino men, as centered in this study. Given the vulnerabilities revealed through this investigation, it is important to account for protective factors that may deviate from what has traditionally been noted in research. For instance, things like technology can play a crucial role in serving as a protective factor for queer-identified

Latino men, especially since it may be one of the few, if not the only, outlet for them to learn about their sexuality. An additional and significant contribution from this study is that there are certain vulnerabilities that can also serve as protective factors.

Although resilience originated from the field of psychology, it is frequently used across disciplines (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010) and in everyday conversations. In this study, the concept has been used to better understand the experiences of gay Latino male collegians, or those in educational settings and through an educational exploration; however, it is important to note that resilience is not confined to one discipline in particular. On the contrary, resilience is better understood by accounting for multiple areas of research, as it is an ever-going, multidimensional, and interdisciplinary concept. For education scholars, resilience should not be measured solely by grades, including grade point average and scores on standardized testing. Even though grades are important, they cannot be the sole determinant of a process that is influenced by many factors. As viewed here, even when working with students in college, there are numerous factors that *must* be accounted for, as they intensely influence the life experiences of students, including but not limited to their academics. When studying resilience and working with minoritized students, especially students of color, it is imperative that researchers and educators are deliberate and careful about accounting for the social identities that are used here while considering additional ones.

The conceptualization of resilience that I propose, as a result of this investigation, is comprised of the following core elements:

- Resilience is a multidimensional process occurring throughout an indefinite period of time. It does not necessarily occur at one stage in life, and can occur multiple times.
- Resilience is connected to peoples' social identities (e.g. race/ethnicity, social economic

status, undocumented status, sexuality, religion, gender).

- Resilience is strongly related to the intersection of multiple forces, including social identities (e.g. race and social economic status; race, sexuality, and culture).
- Resilience is connected and situated within large systems of oppression (e.g. racism, homophobia, patriarchy, heterosexism).
- Vulnerabilities and protective factors can be dependent on context, including time (e.g. political climate, state and federal legislation, access to resources).
- Resilience is not about overcoming every single vulnerability that someone encounters. Overcoming one form of adversity and not another does not mean that the individual is not resilient.
- Because systems of oppression are often the source or basis for the vulnerabilities encountered by minoritized people, it is not easy to deal with or overcome them in their entirety.
- Resilience is not a dichotomous construct. There are certain vulnerabilities that can also serve as protective factors.
- There is not a permanent list of things that would label or unlabel a person as resilient. Resilience is highly contextual.
- Resilience is not solely tied to one individual. It can be a byproduct of things encountered among a family or someone that the resilient individual is connected to (e.g. see undocumented status vulnerability).

6.2 Understanding Resilience for Gay Latino Men

The findings in this study demonstrate that resilient gay Latino men in college experience particular types of vulnerabilities and protective factors; both of which are closely connected to their social identities and situated within systems of oppression. In an attempt to understand the cause of a given vulnerability it is necessary to account for systems of oppression that produce the manifestation of the social identity as a vulnerability or a challenge. The social identity in itself is not inherently problematic. Instead, it becomes problematic when tracing its connections to racism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and heterosexism, among other systems. Thus, this study contributes to the literature precisely by declaring that research with gay Latino men needs to situate adversity related to gay Latino men's most salient social identities (e.g. race/ethnicity, sexuality, social economic status, undocumented status, etc.) at the center of a resilience framework. Additionally, this study contributes by understanding that although gay Latinos are oppressed on the basis of their identities, that is not to say that the oppression solely and repeatedly comes from external groups. As seen here, there can also be intragroup tensions and forms of subjugation, as viewed with the first two themes. The following two themes make a contribution by demonstrating that vulnerabilities can be exacerbated by context, as viewed with the theme of "Being a gay Latino in the era of Trump." In the same thread, they are known to occur both within and beyond the boundaries of education. Ultimately, all four themes are connected to systems of oppression and because such systems are not confined to educational spaces, they can be manifested anywhere and everywhere.

6.2.1 Vulnerabilities

In using a critical perspective to studying resilience, this study revealed different forms of vulnerabilities than those typically discussed in resilience literature; vulnerabilities related to the systemic structures that gay Latino men regularly navigate, and that are connected to their social identities. In short, vulnerabilities are challenges or issues that individuals encounter throughout their lives. In chapter four, I outlined four vulnerabilities that were prevalent in the data and specific to the experiences of gay Latino men.

First, many participants talked about notions of hierarchy within what they call “gay tribes,” which are groups of men in the gay community that are ascribed a label (e.g. twink, bear, cub, otter, jock, daddy, etc.) based on physical traits. Although the term “tribe” can be problematic due to its indigenous, polity, and cultural, connotation, it was the term used by participants here. These groups of gay people are known to share a set of commonalities based on physicality and, as a result, are ascribed a descriptive term and are referred to as such, even if a specific individual does not necessarily agree with such terminology (e.g. twink, bear, cub, otter, jock, daddy, etc.). Each of the labels also has a level of desirability that is attached to it, leading to a hierarchy. These labels have the ability to grant access and privileges to those that are viewed as belonging to groups at the top of the hierarchy, while denying them to those perceived as being at the bottom. Participants only talked about these groups in the context of gay men and not the queer community at large.

Many of the participants in this investigation were well aware of the manner in which gay groups affected their level of immersion and overall experiences in the queer community. While research has pointed to potential benefits of gay groups or subcultures (Maki, 2017), not everyone experiences those benefits, especially not those that are perceived as being at the

bottom of the hierarchy. Unfortunately, for participants, experiences with these groups were, more often than not, negative. Some perceived the use of labeling as an additional form of subjugation within a community that was already oppressed. By using such labels, gay people are placed in yet another confined state. Even when participants did not necessarily subscribe to or abide by the practice of labeling, they still experienced the effects from the labeling because the gay community is known to constantly discuss, value, and place labels related to body image on people. Even when participants said they felt comfortable with the way they looked, they could not help but question their aesthetic precisely because of others' perceptions of them.

Although Maki (2017) notes that not everyone in the community may want to identify with a particular subculture, reality is that it is not entirely dependent on the individual, particularly because of the prevalence and intensity of labeling. These labels function in a formulaic manner, as physical appearance equates to the categorical group that an individual belongs to, whether or not the individual self-subscribes to the given group. Moreover, body image is known to influence the gay community, affecting not only the way that people think of themselves but, in turn, the way that such notions affect their physical presentation. Research has shown gay men who are interested in identifying with a specific subculture can simply go online and input basic demographic information based on physical appearance in order to automatically be classified into a group (Hafertepen, 2011, as cited in Maki, 2017), reflecting a formula driven concept. Such method of classification leaves little to no autonomy for specific individuals to choose the way they want to identify, if at all. Although Maki (2017) claims that the development of subcultures within gay communities grant men the opportunity to identify with a group(s) of their choosing, that is not always the case, especially not among gay groups.

For Latino gay men in this study, race became an additional level of labeling and tension.

When participants talked about particular gay groups, they consistently mentioned the way that whiteness, and therefore white supremacy, informed their experiences, reinforcing literature on the prevalence of whiteness in the queer community (Bérubé, 2001; Han, 2007, 2008; Teunis, 2007; Ward, 2008). Participants stated that gay groups were defined in relation to white people's conceptualizations of beauty and acceptance. This was particularly relevant for the participants who dated white men, where the use of these labels (e.g. twink, bears, cubs, etc.) was even more evident. Because the gay community remains a white community by which standards are set (Bérubé, 2001; Teunis, 2007), it is no surprise that participants discussed negative experiences within these groups. One participant said that since being gay has always been a "white thing," white gays were at the top of the gay hierarchy. Furthermore, one participant discussed the salience of the hierarchy in public spaces, such as the pride parade and within the media. According to Moskowitz, Turrubiates, Lozano, and Hajek (2013), the media and "Western hetero and homosexual expectations have normalized the ideal male body as one that is lean, muscular, and v-shaped" (p. 776). Anyone who does not embody such traits does not necessarily belong. Since these labels are partially based on physicality and physicality leads to stratification, gay groups are based on exclusionary acts embedded in white supremacy.

Participants also talked about the prevalence and effects of femmephobia in the queer community. Femmephobia is "a type of prejudice, discrimination or antagonism that is directed at someone who is perceived to identify, embody or express femininely and towards people or objects gendered femininely" (Blair & Hoskin, 2014, p. 232). In particular, participants talked about being discriminated against for possessing what are perceived as feminine traits. At other times, they spoke about femmephobia in a broader context, such as at different times in their lives or within their families. One participant talked about presenting less feminine as an adult

than as a child. Yet even in the queer community, he felt that men valued masculinity over femininity. The overall value placed on masculinity was prevalent with other participants. Such difference in values are rooted in a larger system of patriarchy where men are viewed as more than women (Abalos, 2002; Colon, 2001; hooks, 2004). According to Colon (2001), the Latino family, in particular, tends to be patriarchal with power, in many ways, ascribed to men. This finding contributes to and extends on previous research examining masculinity on the college experiences of Latino men (Sáenz et al., 2013) by asserting that femmephobia, which is connected to masculinity, is engrained in patriarchy. Patriarchy places value on masculinity over femininity, which can then lead to discrimination and oppression towards those that embody feminine characteristics, particularly men. Participants understood that femmephobia was a byproduct of masculinity and not something that was confined to or born out of the queer community.

Femmephobia can also be seen as a survival strategy that is used when a man wants to feel like more of a man, furthering themselves from femininity. For example, when a man relinquishes his male superiority by possessing and acting in feminine ways, he may be perceived as less of a man. Since women are already viewed as inferior to men within a patriarchal system, any man that displays feminine characteristics is bound to be subjugated to such standards. Because whiteness is also deeply engrained in the queer community, participants felt that men of color continued to rely on white patriarchal notions of masculinity, in which femmephobia continues to be a viable and reliable tool for dealing with diverse sexualities and presentations. Due to the pervasiveness of femmephobia, masculinity, and therefore patriarchy, Latino men are conscious of their presentation at all times, ensuring that they do not wear anything too feminine, unless they want to be seen as such. As viewed, patriarchy manifested

itself in various ways, influencing the manner in which students showed up in different spaces and the ways they behaved and dealt with vulnerabilities. While hooks (2004) states that patriarchy demands that men kill off the emotional parts that make up who they are, as they are associated with women, patriarchy also demands the relinquishing of particular physical presentations. If men fail to rid themselves of traits that are associated with women, they are subjected to being ridiculed, bullied, and marginalized to the fullest extent, even within the queer community.

A third vulnerability highlighted by participants was that of being a gay Latino in the era of Trump. In recent years, President Trump and his administration have consistently attacked both the queer and Latina/o community. For instance, they have failed to recognize LGBTQ pride month, have removed references to the LGBTQ community from the federal government website, and have appointed officials that are anti-LGBTQ (Fitzsimons, 2018). In relation to Latinas/os, Trump has especially attacked Mexicans, labeling them as criminals and rapists (NBC News, 2015; Forbes, 2015; Walker, 2015). With men in particular, Trump has labeled them as “bad hombres” [bad men] whom he intended to get out of the country (Moreno, 2016). Such rhetoric led participants in this study to worry about their rights and safety, among other things.

Although recent literature has shown the challenges that undocumented Latina/o students face as a result of Trump’s administration (Gomez & Huber, 2019; Santellano, 2019), there has been little to no research on the specific experiences of gay Latino collegians under Trump’s presidency. While participants in this study talked about their sexual and racial/ethnic identities being under attack prior to the election of Trump, the issue was exacerbated with him as president. Research shows that there is great concern among the LGBTQ community regarding

their rights, as well as fear for discrimination, including verbal and physical violence, since Trump's presidency (Hirsch, Kaniuka, Brooks, Hirsch, Cohn, and Williams, 2017). Such was the case for participants here, although it was particularly tied to the intersection of their Latino and gay identities.

The Trump presidency transcended college environments, with participants feeling uncared for, scared, anxious, and less safe on their respective campuses. Some said they had to be "on guard" due to the presence of a student group supporting Trump and their disruption on campus. Higher education institutions are already known for lacking safe spaces for the queer community (Patton, 2011; Rhoads, 1997; Sánchez, 2014; Walters & Hayes, 1998) and being places that reinforce heterosexist practices. Trump's election simply exacerbated the issue. While L. F. Garcia (2015) expressed that there were few safe spaces outside of the classroom, even the classroom can be a place that students feel on guard in. This finding aligns with research on the violence and discrimination experienced by gay and lesbian college students (D'Augelli, 1989, 1992; Rhoads, 1997; Sánchez, 2014), yet adds a layer of racial/ethnic intersectionality.

Due to the intersection of their race/ethnic and queer identities, participants also experienced racialized and homophobic incidents as a vulnerability. This finding is consistent with prior research highlighting the oppression and challenges queer students face due to such intersectionality (Akerlund & Cheung, 2000; Camacho, 2016; Nadal, Whitman, Davis, Erazo, & Davidoff, 2016; Ocampo, 2014; Wall & Washington, 1991). These incidents were manifested in physical and verbal attacks. For some participants, racialized incidents started in elementary school and continued until college, with constant attacks on their multiple minoritized identities. It's important to note that the racialized incidents discussed here are rooted in racism, which Harper (2012) defined as

individual actions (both intentional and unconscious) that engender marginalization and inflict varying degrees of harm on minoritized persons; structures that determine and cyclically remanufacture racial inequity; and institutional norms that sustain White privilege and permit the ongoing subordination of minoritized persons” (p. 10).

On the other hand, homophobia is rooted in patriarchy and heterosexism. Heterosexism is known to devalue any identity that is not heterosexual, giving privilege and power to heterosexuals (Smith et al., 2008). When understood in relation to one another, these systems are proven to put gay Latinos in even more vulnerable positions. Participants in this study also talked about experiencing microaggressions within predominantly white spaces, including traditional Greek fraternities, which only took a toll on them. Previous research has found that racialized incidents tend to cause racial stress among marginalized groups of people (Harrell, 2000; Johnson & Arbona, 2006; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007), from physical to spiritual harm (Harrell, 2000).

6.2.2 Protective Factors

In examining processes of resilience, it is important to not only discuss vulnerabilities but also protective factors. Protective factors serve nurturing and protective roles that help counter the negative effects that derive from adversity, including personal strengths that someone already has (e.g. strong work ethic, internal locus of control) to resources they can access (Morales & Trotman, 2010). Similar to the revealing of different forms of vulnerabilities, this study also uncovered protective factors not usually found in the resilience literature. It is critical to understand that the protective factors discussed here are not necessarily a direct response or solution to each of the vulnerabilities presented in the previous section. Because systems of

oppression (e.g. racism, heterosexism, patriarchy) were often the source or basis for the vulnerabilities encountered by gay Latino men in this study, it is not easy to deal with or overcome them in their entirety. Instead, the protective factors discussed here were things that enhanced the lives and experiences of gay Latinos in one way or another.

For one, participants consistently talked about the role of technology, particularly as a way to learn more about the queer community. Since Latina/o families are known for being homophobic, it is often perceived that the traditional values among them become a hindrance to the development of a gay identity for Latino men (Colon, 2001; Guzman, 2006), as was the case for some participants here. As a result, gay Latinos experience little to no autonomy to explore and better understand their sexuality. Due to rejection received from family, friends, peers at school, and other institutional agents (e.g. teachers, administrators, principals, etc.), participants often did not have the option to ask questions or speak freely about their sexuality. Instead, they had to find ways of developing and exploring their sexual identities outside of their familial and educational contexts. Hence, technology became an important outlet that provided them with a level of autonomy that was non-existent in other spaces. One participant, for example, said that his computer became an important resource. It was through Google searches and YouTube videos that he learned about labels and the process of coming out in the queer community, including peoples' specific coming out stories. For others, YouTube destigmatized the negative perceptions that gay Latinos had of their sexuality since that is what they learned growing up. In addition, chat rooms were also an important avenue for having conversations with people and asking questions related to gender and sexuality. The role of technology not only served as a protective factor in terms of learning and exposure to the queer community but also in the sense that it did not require participants to have conversations about their sexuality in person. Instead,

it was something that they could do on their own accord.

This finding aligns with previous research noting the importance of social media for the queer community (Craig & McInroy, 2014; Craig, McInroy, McCready, & Alaggia, 2015; Miller, 2017; Wuest, 2014). For instance, Craig and McInroy (2013) found that media allowed LGBTQ youth to access resources, explore their identities, and engage in the process of coming out. As a result, LGBTQ youth's offline lives were enhanced, particularly through increased self-confidence, self-acceptance, and building relationships, among other things. This finding also aligns with Craig et al's. (2015) claim that media can serve as a catalyst for resilience among LGBTQ youth, as it can help them cope with discrimination related to their sexuality. At the same time, this finding makes a contribution to the literature, as the role of technology in learning about the queer community has been severely underexplored for gay Latino men, particularly when accounting for the role of family, or lack of, while growing up.

Art, music, and writing was another protective factor that gay Latinos in this study accessed. This finding is consistent with the previous one, as it involved activities that participants could engage with on their own accord. Art, music, and writing did not necessarily require them to interact with other individuals or disclose their sexuality to anyone if they did not want to. The fact that these three protective factors were readily available made them especially useful for gay Latino males in this study, particularly for those that were not out or who were out to a few people. Participants talked about a lack of role models and access to gay people growing up. But for some, art became a space to explore this identity. One participant's high school art class served as an outlet in dealing with the lack of exposure. In fact, he classified art as a form of release and the only thing that kept him sane, using art to draw whatever he wanted with whatever colors he wanted without being judged. In many ways, art functioned in similar manner

as the role of technology, particularly as a way of coping through escape from challenges they encountered (Craig, et al., 2015). Although Craig et al. (2015) found that LGBTQ youth accessed media to deal with stigmatized content from popular social media, students here used art to express a level of autonomy and as a form of expression. For others, it was writing that served as an outlet. Writing affirmed participants' feelings about their intelligence and allowed them to feel liberated. On writing, they could be whoever they wanted to be without worrying about being reprimanded for it.

For many participants in this study, education was understood as not only a path to opportunities and success but also as an escape from many of the vulnerabilities that they experienced throughout their lives. For example, going to school and doing well provided participants with an outlet from racist and homophobic incidents as well as from rejection they experienced from their families and peers at school. In many ways, education served as a form of coping through escapism (Craig et al., 2015). For gay Latinos with little to no autonomy growing up, education provided them with the opportunity to exercise a level of freedom, particularly in college. It was then that they could make decisions without others' input. Still, others saw their education and doing well academically as a way to escape their hometown by the time they got to college. Interestingly, however, there were instances where school contexts, such as the classroom, also served as points of vulnerabilities, as being in the classroom did not prevent some participants from being bullied or attacked. Nonetheless, education was perceived as a protective factor because it gave participants something to look forward to. In their perspective, it was a way to put their vulnerabilities aside and prioritize their academics. To some extent, education had aspects of both vulnerabilities and protective factors.

The final protective factor identified in this study was influential people. The overwhelming majority of participants underscored the importance that others had in their lives. When experiencing a multitude of vulnerabilities, influential people were consistently referenced as a protective factor. Influential people included mentors and advisors; counselors; kin networks; and chosen family. In referencing the aforementioned influencers, participants specifically talked about the role of women and chosen family. This finding is consistent with a study exploring the ways that masculinity and gender performativity influence how first-generation gay Latino men access institutional resources (Rodriguez & Patrón, 2017). In particular, Rodriguez and Patrón (2017) found that Latinos explicitly sought out help from women while navigating the larger campus environment. These women served as points of connection beyond academics, as participants felt more comfortable, vulnerable, and free to express their emotions. Like women, chosen family was also a key protective factor for gay Latino collegians. Chosen family, also known as fictive kin, have been noted as important sources of support for gay students (Duran & Pérez, 2017; Duran & Pérez, 2019; Strayhorn, 2012). According to Strayhorn (2012), fictive kin are “supportive family-like relationships with meaningful individuals” (p. 46). Chosen family are not necessarily blood related but are known to serve in caring, nurturing, and affectionate roles. For participants in this study, friends from school, mentors, and fraternity brothers were identified as chosen family.

6.2.3 Social Identities

Because I take a critical approach to studying resilience related to participants’ social identities, I highlighted adversities and protective factors associated with six main identities including race/ethnicity, religion, social economic status, undocumented status, gender, and

sexuality. Although there were other social identities that were important to the participants in this study beyond the six listed here, these were some of the most salient. I define social identities as those that are socially constructed and connected to systems of oppression (e.g. racism, heterosexism, homophobia, etc.) (Weber, 1998). Such systems are known to limit and restrict some people in various life aspects while privileging others. Although it may appear that the social identities discussed here individually and intersectionally lead to vulnerabilities or challenges, it is imperative to note that it is much more nuanced. To be clear, the six identities are not the problem or inherent reasons as to why participants experience adversity. Instead, these identities are connected to large systems of oppression that, in turn, lead to adverse situations. These systems are highly contextual and can lead to power driven hierarchies (Weber, 1998), which are often determined by white normative standards.

The six identities discussed here were used to showcase the ways that they influenced a process of resilience. As previously discussed, resilience is about vulnerabilities and protective factors, including access to people and resources. While it may have seemed like the social identities mostly or only led to vulnerabilities, it is important to note that vulnerabilities are part of the process of resilience. Since some identities were manifested in vulnerabilities related to systems of oppression, there was not always a direct protective factor to address or overcome the given system. Nonetheless, it is critical that these identities are taken into account when understanding resilience for students of color and gay Latino men in particular. Finally, although I presented the social identities separately from one another, there was tremendous overlap between them. For example, participants often talked about sexuality and race/ethnicity or about their low-income identity and their race/ethnicity at the intersection.

Racial/ethnic identity was cited as the most important identity across participants in this

study. At the same time, it played an immense role in their resilience. Although some participants used it as a source of motivation to propel their education, others underwent vulnerabilities due to racism and microaggressions they encountered. This finding is consistent with Patrón and Garcia's (2016) study on resilient Latino males, where they found that specific social identities served as forms of motivation for the participants. At the same time, this finding is critical in advancing conceptions of resilience, as few studies have addressed the ways in which oppressed identities contribute to a process of resilience.

Participants' religious identity was another identity that was frequently referenced as playing a role in students' lives and resilience. Yet research has shown that religious entities tend to condemn queer Latinos for their sexuality (e.g. Abalos, 2002; Angelo, 2005; Coronado, 2009; Ocampo, 2014). D. I. Garcia (2008) noted that Christianity is known to teach intolerant views towards people in the queer community while viewing queer self-identification as a sin. Despite religion and a queer identity only being viewed in opposition, there were participants that experienced religion as a protective factor.

For others, their social economic status was an identity that played important roles throughout their lives. Coming from low-income, poor backgrounds, this identity simultaneously worked as a vulnerability and protective factors for them. For instance, one participant was cognizant that growing up in a working class community led to attending schools that lacked in many areas, as he put it. As a result, he did not receive the best education. Being poor, however, also motivated him to want to do well in school and get a college education in order to contribute to his family's financial situation; something that other participants also described. This finding makes a contribution to resilience literature by demonstrating how one identity can function in both positive and negative ways (Patrón & Garcia, 2016). Patrón and Garcia found that although

some Latino males in their study were affected by their low-income identity, it was the very same identity that motivated and propelled them to do well in school. Whether an identity functions as a vulnerability or protective factor, or both, depends on context and an individual's specific circumstances.

Although there were not any participants that identified as undocumented at the time of the interview, many of them talked about living in mixed-status households. Living in a mixed-status home subsequently led to vulnerabilities that the participants experienced. Even though the participants did not possess the undocumented identity, they were affected by it in various ways. One participant in particular talked about not being able to apply to college out of state, having trouble filling out FAFSA, and being “shunned” and viewed as “less than” for having undocumented parents. In relation to a resilience framework, vulnerabilities do not have to be related to identities that are directly and solely possessed by the individual. They can be related to a close family member or someone that the individual lives with, for example. Resilience is about adversity and there was considerable adversity that the participants in this study experienced, specifically related to an undocumented status, even if they were not undocumented themselves.

The final two identities that participants talked about were gender and sexuality. They were often discussed at the intersection and in relation to other identities. Even though a majority of participants understood that as men they were granted privileges over women, being a man was not an identity that was necessarily important to them. The lack of importance and salience placed on gender was not necessarily surprising, as it was the *only* dominant identity that participants consistently talked about. Merely on the basis of their gender, men are automatically positioned in a dominant role over women, especially within a patriarchal society (Abalos, 2002;

hooks, 2004) and Latina/o culture. Dominant identities tend to be less salient. Whereas minoritized identities tend to be more salient, as viewed with the participants here. For this reason, gender was often overlooked and ranked lower among participants in this study. Gender became most salient when it intersected with participants' Latino identity and when situated within familial contexts, as there are a set of pressures and expectations for Latino men (Abalos, 2002; Akerlund & Cheung, 2000; Colon, 2001; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009), which include defending and protecting the family and being the head of the home (Akerlund & Cheung, 2000; Colon, 2000; Schwartz et al., 2009). Even then, their gender identity mostly served as a vulnerability.

When specifically talking about being gay and their resilience, participants referred to vulnerabilities they encountered. Given large systems of oppression, such as heterosexism and patriarchy (Berkman & Zinberg, 1997; hooks, 2004; Smith, Foley, & Chaney, 2008), it was no surprise that sexuality was often situated within different forms of adversity. Although less common, participants in this study also talked about the salience of their sexuality after coming out and being accepted by family. For instance, such participants talked about being socialized in Latina/o culture, which is perceived as devaluing and putting non-heterosexual identities in opposition with other identities. Upon coming out, however, both participants experienced love, acceptance, and support from family members. Such acceptance made it easier for them to accept their sexuality. In particular, such students talked about being accepted by their fathers, whom the literature has described (Latino men) as patriarchal and not accepting of non-heterosexual identities. At the same time, this finding extends and challenges literature that describes Latina/o families solely as homophobic.

6.2.4 Redefining Resilience for Gay Latino Men

Aligned with the findings and proposed conceptualization and expanding of resilience theory, I offer four declarative conclusions about resilience as a process and gay Latino men. The following are not presented in any particular order.

- 1) Gay Latino men live multidimensional lives with overlapping identities. When students talked about the manner in which their most salient social identity influenced a process of resilience, they did it by talking about the intersection of multiple identities. For instance, when participants made sense of the vulnerabilities they experienced because of their sexuality, they did it in relation to being a man and Latino. It was rare to non-existent for them to talk about one single identity without accounting for others.
- 2) Although gay Latinos are largely oppressed as a group based on the intersectionality of their identities, particularly from groups of people that possess dominant identities (e.g. heterosexual, white, masculine, etc.), there can also be intragroup tensions and forms of subjugation. These tensions are related to physicality, femininity and level of masculinity, and gay groups. Again, these forms of oppression are not inherently born out gay communities of color. They are connected to white supremacy and patriarchy.
- 3) It is critical to understand that protective factors do not have to be a direct response to specific vulnerabilities, as some vulnerabilities do not have a simple solution or linear way of being dealt with. Protective factors can include resources that require minimal to no in-person interaction with others, particularly for people that are not out, do not feel comfortable, or simply choose not to talk about their sexuality with anyone. For instance, technology (e.g. YouTube, video games, chat rooms, etc.), and music, art, and writing, are significant protective factors that facilitate and allow participants to immerse

themselves in queer culture, learn about gender and sexuality, and connect with other people in the queer community. Such outlets are especially important for students who do not otherwise have an opportunity to explore their sexuality due to familial and societal rejections, among other things.

- 4) Resilience, and vulnerabilities in particular, are highly contextual. While participants were oppressed because of their identities prior to the election of President Trump, their experiences were exacerbated once he was officially in office. The intensity to which vulnerabilities affect the lives of gay Latinos partly depends on real time societal and cultural happenings.

Overall, a process of resilience is connected to an individual's access to resources, salience of their social identities, and that is situated within and across systems of oppression. To holistically account for resilience as a process, it is key that the aforementioned components, among others, are considered.

6.3 Implications for Practice

Although the sample of participants in this study was college students, the findings demonstrate that their resilience and overall experiences are not confined to educational spaces. On the contrary, they occur across contexts, including home, public events (e.g. pride parade), the classroom, social media platforms, while driving, and within queer communities broadly. Nonetheless, it is critical to note that there are things that educational institutions can engage in to better and more adequately serve gay Latino male collegians. The implications for practice offered here are based on the research findings and are also consistent with prior literature. For

one, college spaces have been documented as being hostile environments for queer students (D'Augelli, 1989; 1992; Evans & Broido, 1999; Rankin, 2003; Rhoads, 1997; Wickens & Sandlin, 2010). This study reinforced such literature by highlighting vulnerabilities that students experienced throughout the educational pipeline, not just in college and university settings.

Homophobia and different forms of racism were noted as challenges that students consistently underwent. For instance, participants shared being verbally and physically attacked since middle school years— from being called “f-a-g” to threatened to being killed. One student talked about being kicked, shoved, and choked in the school hallway to the point that he felt he was going to die. Others shared experiencing microaggressions in the classroom and as part of being part of a predominantly white fraternity. These types of incidents are not acceptable, no matter the circumstance. There needs to be more accountability on students and school personnel who discriminate against others because of their identities. As a result, it is imperative that educational institutions are intentional about creating campus climates that are not only welcoming to queer students but that protect them from being abused and make them feel safe. There is no reason for why a student, regardless of their background or identities, should feel unsafe in school settings.

In understanding these experiences, it is the responsibility of institutional stakeholders and policymakers to be more considerate of gay Latino males' educational undertakings so that they can be better served throughout the educational pipeline and can graduate at greater rates. Even if students are graduating, that is no reason to ignore their racialized and sexualized experiences. One student expressed a strong distrust for school administrators, as they did not intervene or do anything about the racialized incidents he reported. School administrators need to be more attentive and welcoming of students who express concern over their safety. Otherwise,

they too become part of the problem. In this regard, administrators need to be better prepared on how to handle such situations, understanding that students' well being need to be prioritized. In the same vein, teachers and other school administrators need to regularly check-in with their students to ensure they are doing well.

Art, music, and writing proved to be an important protective factor for gay Latino men. As a result, I recommend that schools consider creating scholarships and fellowships that are specific to these things. Art, music, and writing allowed participants to express their feelings, among other things. If such activities were more intentionally and strategically infused into school activities and curriculum, gay students can potentially become more engaged. In the same thread, while technology proved to be a significant resource for gay Latinos to immerse themselves in queer culture and learn more about what it meant to be gay, students should not have to solely rely on technology. Curriculum needs to be revised and should incorporate queer perspectives. Again, in this manner, students can become more engaged in schoolwork.

The role of women was another significant protective factor for students in this study. Participants identified the various ways in which women enhanced their experiences on campus. For example, one student talked about three Latina women that were instrumental in his college journey. Each of them helped him in different areas of his academics and well being. Often times, women were described as being more welcoming and open about the participants' sexuality, particularly because men showed signs of masculinity. Consequently, it is important that colleges and universities better prepare and equip male institutional stakeholders with the skills to effectively work with sexually minoritized students. Because there were few institutional stakeholders that students could relate to, their needs to be more of them, including queer faculty and administrators and staff of color. This needs to be an intentional and hard push

from higher level administrators. By hiring more faculty and staff that students can relate to, they may become an important resource for gay Latinos to meet and learn from someone who identities similarly to them. Participants in this study consistently shared that they often did not know anyone that was gay growing up or in school. This is one way of helping fill that void.

In the same line of work, their needs to be more affirming spaces that are specific to gay Latino men and the queer community and funding to sustain them. Students who participated in the *USC Gay Latino Male Summit* and who were a part of the study frequently referenced the event as an empowering space; one that many of them had never experienced, especially not with so many other gay Latino men in the same room. Given the current political climate with Trump in office, participants shared that they felt as if they were being directly attacked. Specifically, participants discussed fear they experienced because of Trump and his stance on the queer and Latina/o community. For these reasons, it is critical to develop programming and create spaces that affirm gay Latino men's identities, make them feel safe, and that simply serve as space to socialize, meet, and work with other gay students.

Higher education institutions need to develop and host educational events, such as panels and information sessions that demystify the long-standing stigma and pathologization of queer students of color. It is of fundamental importance that colleges and universities involve students, and even their families in such events. As viewed here, families play an immense role in relation to the ways gay Latino males view and understand their sexuality. It is important that such events account for the role of systems of oppression (e.g. racism, heterosexism, and patriarchy) in perpetuating negative experiences for queer students and how families may, consciously or subconsciously, sustain such systems through their beliefs and practices.

6.4 Contributions to Research

Literature that specifically centers the experiences of gay Latino male collegians is severely underrepresented, allowing this study to make important contributions across various disciplines. When specifically accounting for Latino men's resilience, literature is even more limited. As demonstrated throughout this investigation, I sought to make a number of contributions to research, including the way resilience has traditionally been theorized. In this section, I discuss three contributions this study makes along with directions and opportunities for future research.

For one, this study makes a contribution by situating adversity related to gay Latino men's most salient social identities (e.g. race/ethnicity, sexuality, social economic status, undocumented status, etc.) at the center of a resilience framework. In doing so, I make an explicit connection between the identities and systems of oppression. Due to historical and contemporary systems of oppression, which are characterized by privileging groups with dominant identities and subjugating those with minoritized identities (Weber, 1998), gay Latinos have consistently been burdened with vulnerabilities that affect their lives in various ways. The functioning and manifestations of systems of domination, however, are not necessarily visible, making it difficult to see and therefore understand the ways that they affect the experiences of people of color. On the surface, it may seem as if the identities presented here are the problem and reason why students experience homophobia, racism, xenophobia, and heterosexism. It is not until one analyzes their connection to institutions of domination that one can trace the underlying issues. For this reason, it is critical to pay close attention to the intricacies and functioning of systems of power when working with minoritized students.

In accounting for gay Latino men's social identities, a different set of vulnerabilities

arose than those traditionally discussed in the literature. Historically, resilience has remained a race-neutral, gender-neutral, queer-neutral, and immigration-neutral phenomenon. If resilience is about adversity, it is of utmost importance to include those identities and vulnerabilities related to them in resilience work. In fact, it would be limiting, a disservice, and a distortion to gay Latino men's lives and conceptualizations of resilience if they were overlooked. Again, in making sense of these identities, it is important to consider the roles of institutionalized oppression. Otherwise, they are left to stand on their own, which will carelessly leads to them being viewed as a problem. Weber (1998) states that "race, class, gender, and sexuality are social constructions that are constantly undergoing change both at the level of social institutions and at the level of personal identity." As such, it is key to account for the interconnections between the two. To the aforementioned systems and identities, I add undocumented status and religion, which both proved to play a role in the lives of gay Latino men.

In addition, this study aligns with previous research understanding resilience as a process (Luthar et al., 2000; Patrón & G.A. Garcia; 2016; Rutter, 1990; Rutter, 2012; Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010) while adding that is developed over an indefinite period of time. Instead of understanding resilience solely as a personality trait that someone is born with (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Wagnild & Young, 1993), I argue that it is a process that is connected to an individual's access to resources, salience of their social identities, and that is situated within and across systems of oppression. Because resilience involves adversity and adversity occurs on a continuous basis, it is important to account for all instances over a lifetime. In doing so, it is critical to understand different forms of adversity that someone undergoes in relation to one another. In this manner, one acquires a holistic understanding of an individual's life. When understanding resilience as a personality trait, it is highly probable that the individual

will be viewed as exclusively responsible if they do not successfully overcome the vulnerabilities they are faced with. This study deliberately deviates from such perspective, as adversity is much more complex. Adversity, in relation to the identities described here, is connected to systems of oppression. It would be inadequate if they were completely dismissed.

Finally, this study makes a contribution by shedding light on the experiences of gay Latino male collegians. While there has been a growing body of work on queer Latino men (Camacho, 2016; Colon, 2001; Duran & Pérez, 2017, 2019; Eaton & Rios, 2017; Patrón, 2017; Rios & Eaton, 2016; Rodriguez & Patrón, 2017), there has been limited to no research on their resilience. Due to possessing multiple marginalized identities, gay Latino men are known to experience challenges in familial, educational, and religious spaces, among others. However, there is little known about the role of vulnerabilities and importance of protective factors, for example. This study specifically illustrates vulnerabilities that exist within queer culture through the use of labels. Queer groups function in a hierarchical manner, as there are specific physical attributes, tied to patriarchy and whiteness, that are deemed superior and more desirable than others. Whether or not gay Latino men choose to participate in these groups, reality is that it is almost impossible not to, particularly because they are ascribed a label by others based on how they look. In the same thread, femmephobia was another vulnerability discussed by participants, which was also connected to patriarchy. This area of research has been largely under theorized.

Given the current political climate and frequent attacks on the queer and Latina/o community, the election of Trump unearthed another set of adversities for the participants here. Their experiences were exacerbated both on and off their respective campuses. Consistent with my conceptualization of resilience, vulnerabilities can be contextual; meaning that they can be related to the political climate at a given time, as shown here. The political climate can then

affect the experiences of a given student population, in this case gay Latino men. Equally important to resilience and students' experiences are protective factors. This study revealed two protective factors— technology, and art, music, and writing— that did not require gay Latinos to speak with anyone about their sexuality, other identities, or anything else they had going on. This was particularly important for those that were not out yet and wanted to learn more about what it meant to be gay. Essentially, they were resources that participants could utilize on their own accord. Influential people was another finding that is consistent with prior research on supportive networks, including chosen family.

6.4.1 Future Research

Future research on resilience should utilize the proposed conceptualizations of a resilience framework to study its applicability and/or limitations when working with other student groups. This study specifically worked with gay Latino men, whom, as shown here, face a particular set of vulnerabilities due to their most salient identities. At the same time, they also accessed and experienced a different set of protective factors. Some of the vulnerabilities and protective factors discussed in this study were directly related to students' race/ethnicity, sexuality, and gender, which can be limiting in understanding other students' processes of resilience, especially if these identities are not as important to them. In addition, not all of the proposed points in the “Expanding and Redefining Notions of Resilience” section are specific to gay Latino men. Research needs to explore whether such points still stand for other student groups or if their needs to be modifications made.

Even if the same identities discussed here prove to be salient for a different group of students, the manner in which they manifest themselves may be different. For instance, for a

group of heterosexual Latino men, religion may not necessarily function as a vulnerability. Instead, it can be a significant protective factor. This study has shown that a religious identity can function as a vulnerability, particularly because non-heterosexual identities are often perceived as being in opposition with Christian values. For cisgender heterosexual men, that cannot be the case, as they possess a dominant sexual identity that is in accordance with what has traditionally been taught and deemed as correct for Christians. It can very well be that religion solely manifests itself as a value and protective factor for them. Still, the dynamics may be different for women, as different religious denominations have different expectations of them, altering the salience and value placed on religion, and subsequently a process of resilience.

In applying a resilience framework with other groups of students, future research should also specifically work with heterosexual men. Notions of hierarchy among gay groups, and homophobia are vulnerabilities that are connected to minoritized sexualities. Because heterosexual men do not possess them, they cannot experience them. Similarly, technology, and art, music, and writing were important protective factors in this study because they were outlets that allowed gay Latinos to learn and express their sexuality and gender. Again, because heterosexual men do not have to worry about being rejected from their families due to their sexuality, for example, they do not have to worry about immersing themselves in online platforms to learn about their sexuality. As a result, it would be noteworthy to explore vulnerabilities as well as protective factors that are pertinent to their lives.

Most of the participants in this study came from Southern California. Given the demographics of the state and the geographic region in particular, it made sense that a majority of the sample came from there. While this may be a limitation of the study, it is also an opportunity for future research. In order to comprehensively make comparisons across student

groups based on institutional type, it is important that there is a balance in the student sample. As such, future research should be intentional about recruiting students from different regions in the United States. Moreover, research should also focus on institution type. Since 2-year colleges offer different resources for students than 4-year institutions, it is important to document differences between the two, especially within a resilience framework. Geographic location and institution type may influence the salience of racial, gender, sexual, and religious identities, thereby leading to a different set of experiences. It is important to document those differences.

Finally, future research should explore processes of resilience for Latinas. The ways in which the social identities discussed here function are contextual and can vary by gender. Because resilience is concerned with adversity and women possess a less dominant gender identity when compared to men, they are known to face different vulnerabilities. It is crucial that this is further explored in the literature. Gender, along with other identities, may also influence the ways that resilience is studied, making it an area of research that needs to be more theorized, especially in relation to resilience. Systems of oppression, such as patriarchy, can have different effects on women than those discussed here with gay Latino men. Gender dynamics may produce diverging results from those presented here, especially given certain gender role ideals about women within Latina/o culture (Ovink, 2013; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995).

6.5 Concluding Thoughts

Embarking on this dissertation journey was filled with many emotions, especially during the data collection and writing phases. Carefully and attentively listening to each student's narrative revealed a set of feelings for me; feelings related to happiness, sadness, and

overwhelmingness, but more importantly hopefulness, thankfulness, and confidence. Despite consistently hearing stories of rejection; abuse, including physical, emotional, and psychological; and marginalization, hopefulness was the underlying theme.

Hopefulness in the sense that despite the hardships and vulnerabilities that participants' underwent, they were still successful in their academic endeavors, had big dreams that they were actively pursuing, were in the process of finding peace and acceptance within themselves and others around them, and displayed agency and desire to define the person they were and wanted to become. Still, there were others that demonstrated high levels of autonomy over their identities and overall being. They were actively looking for and engaging in activities to help others in and beyond the queer community. Hopefulness because participants found meaning, interest, and placed importance on the work that we engaged in together (this study). Hopefulness because students left the interview process with intentions of helping their peers, particularly those may have been experiencing similar vulnerabilities, and also left excited to hear updates about the study, including future publications. Everlasting thankfulness because participants were vulnerable, honest, open, and willing to share their stories; stories that many of them had never shared with anybody else, especially not a stranger like myself.

Throughout the data collection process, participants consistently expressed their happiness to be a part of this work. Comments like the following gave me strength and served as a constant reminder as to why I engaged in this work:

- “Thanks for everything and being a mentor to me! I found myself in your research and I never thought that was possible.”
- “Hey man, thank you so much for stopping by last week [I met with this student and helped him plan an event geared towards gay men of color for the student organization

that he serves as president for. I also attended the actual event]. And even the interview, I feel it was therapeutic, looking back at everything and who I am.” Similarly, multiple students planned or were in the process of planning events for LGBTQ students on their respective campuses. They regularly checked in with me to see if I could help in any way.

- “I am the happiest I have ever been.”
- Students went out of their way to email me and say things like, “I am very interested in being a part of this [study].”
- “Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this study.”

Now, how can I not be hopeful?

APPENDIX A Interview #1- Life Story

Interview

****TURN ON RECORDER****

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study about your life experiences. This study consists of one interview, participation in a private and closed Facebook group, and the collection of photographs taken by you on your campus. The interview will be audio recorded from beginning to end. All of the information collected through the interview, Facebook, and the photographs will remain confidential and none of your personal information will be disclosed. Your participation in this study will not affect your status as a student at your current institution in any way. Furthermore, you are free to discontinue your participation from this study at any point in the process. Do you have any questions? Let me know if you have any concerns at any point in the process.

- To start, can you state your desired pseudonym or alternative name, year in school, and major?
- For this interview, I am interested in understanding your **life experiences**. This is **your story**! Start back in **elementary school** and bring me up to the **present** about how you have become the person you are now. Think about **key people** and **key events** to return to for further discussion. I want you to start with some of your earliest memories and tell me your story. When possible, please provide concrete examples and context.
- Can you tell me about a time that you experienced discrimination within school (maybe provide multiple examples)?
- Can you tell me about a time that you experienced discrimination outside of school?
- How did you resolve these experiences?
- Have you ever thought of yourself as resilient? (meaning)

Probes:

- **Who was involved?** What did they do?
- What was happening at the time?
- What happened next?
- How did that **change or shape** how you saw your self?

Other things to PROBE for:

- **Family background;** family influences (extended kin)
- **Cultural experiences and values of family; immigration experiences** of family
- **Financial stressors** on family; other family pull factors
- **Educational values** of parents; sources of **cultural wealth** (i.e., language)
- **Mentors, teachers, siblings, guidance counselors, peers, other role models**

After Interview

- Remind him about reviewing the transcript
- Provide him with guidelines for Facebook group participation

APPENDIX B Interview #2- Adversity/Experiences Related to Social Identities

Before Interview:

- Greet the student – tell him you enjoyed what he shared in the previous session

Interview:

****TURN ON RECORDER****

- Were there other events or experiences that come to mind we did not talk about last time?
Tell me about those.
- **Tell me more about _____** that you mentioned last time. [Go back to key events/experiences from the transcript that you want to probe more about]
- Can you tell me about the **identities that are most important to you** (for example, being Latino, being male, being queer, etc.)?
- How have these identities contributed to your **adversity (a challenging situation)**?
- How have these **identities contributed to your resilience** (ability to overcome difficult situations)?
- Tell me about a time **you experienced racism**.
- Tell me about a time **you experienced homophobia**.
- In difficult times (including the challenges you mentioned), what has **helped you move forward** or better deal with such instances?

Photo Conversation

- Can you describe the pictures? What are they pictures of?
- Why did you choose these pictures in particular?

- How do the pictures represent your process of overcoming something difficult in your life?

Other things to PROBE for (Interview):

- **Challenges pertaining other identities** (e.g. gender, SES, undocumented status)
- Anything that **helped counter the challenges**, including material things, people, and involvement in formal/informal activities including religious activities, cultural activities, sports, gangs, dance groups, student organizations, or political organizations
- **Resilience as process** (e.g. challenges that weren't successfully dealt with)
- **Influential people:** Mentors, teachers, siblings, guidance counselors, peers, other role models
- Role of position within the family including eldest/youngest, only male, etc

Other things to PROBE for (Photo Conversation):

- Specific locations
- Specific memories tied to the pictures
- Distinctive qualities of the contexts

After Interview

- Turn off the recorder
- Thank the participant
- Remind him about reviewing the transcript

APPENDIX C Online Recruitment Form

GAY LATINO MALE STUDY

Thank you for your interest in this study with gay Latino male collegians from different colleges and universities! The purpose of this study is to better understand the resilience and educational experiences of gay Latinos.

To participate in this study you must be 1) at least 18 years of age, 2) self-identify as a gay Latino, and 3) currently enrolled as an undergraduate or graduate student in a college or university.

Participation in this study includes the following: a) two interviews with the principal investigator, b) participation in a private Facebook group discussion, and c) taking pictures on your respective campus. Interviews will take place in person or virtually. The information you share will be kept confidential and your name and/or other personal identifying information will be kept anonymous.

Please fill out this form to participate. Once complete, the principal investigator, Oscar, will follow up with you to schedule the first interview. Oscar is a visiting pre-doctoral scholar and research associate at the Race and Equity Center at the University of Southern California. If you have any questions, please email Oscar at op_303@usc.edu.

Name (First and Last):

Email:

Current College/University:

Class Standing (e.g. Freshmen, 2nd Year Masters, 1st year PhD, etc.):

Major (e.g. Chemistry, Ethnic Studies, etc.):

APPENDIX D Demographic Form

Resilience Study: Student Participant Information

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. All responses will be kept confidential and your identity will remain private. Your responses to these questions are optional, but will be helpful in reporting findings.

1. Name: _____ Birth date: ____/____/____
2. Preferred alternative name (pick a name different from your own): _____
3. Preferred method of communication (check/complete all that apply):
☐ Cell (text/call): _____ ☐ E-mail: _____
☐ Facebook: _____
4. What is your sex? _____
5. What is your sexual orientation? _____
6. What is your gender identity? _____ Pronouns: _____
7. How do you identify racially/ethnically? _____
8. Mother's birthplace: ☐ U.S. ☐ Outside of U.S. Father's birthplace: ☐ U.S. ☐ Outside of U.S.
9. Language(s) spoken: _____
10. Are you the first in your family to go to college? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Decline to State
11. Are you an international student? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Decline to State
12. Are you an immigrant student? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Decline to State
13. Are you eligible for Pell grants? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Decline to State
14. Current Institution: _____ Are you enrolled? ☐ Full-time ☐ Part-time
Class level: _____
15. Current major: _____ Current academic department: _____
16. Do you work? ☐ Full-time ☐ Part-time Degree objective (i.e., BS, MA): _____

17. Please list student organizations/co-curricular programs you are involved with:

18. Prior to this study, did you ever consider or think of yourself as someone who is resilient?

☐ Yes ☐ No

19. In order to verify validity, would you be willing to review preliminary results from this study?

☐ Yes ☐ No

20. Rank the importance of the following identities to you? (1 = most important; 9 least important)

_____ Gender identity	_____ Undocumented identity	_____ Race/Ethnicity
_____ Sexual Orientation	_____ Religious Identity	_____ Other (please specify)
_____ Social economic status	_____ Sex	_____ Other (please specify)

Comments _____

APPENDIX E: Demographic Information for Gay Latino Men

Pseudonym	Race/Ethnicity	Most Important Identity	Class Standing	First-Gen College
Andy	Latino/Central American	Social Economic Status	2 nd Year*	Yes
Angel	Latino	N.A.	Senior	No
Arturo	Latino	Race/Ethnicity	2 nd Year Grad	Yes
Baltazar	Latinx/Mexican/Puerto Rican	Race/Ethnicity	1 st Year Grad	Yes
Candido	Latino	Race/Ethnicity	Junior	Yes
Charlie	Latino	Race/Ethnicity	Junior	Yes
Cole	Latino	Race/Ethnicity	1 st Year Grad	Yes
Cristobal	Mexican/Chicano	Race/Ethnicity	1 st Year Grad	Yes
Dave	Hispanic	Social Economic Status	1 st Year Grad	Yes
DC	Hispanic/Latino, Mexican American	Race/Ethnicity	3 rd Year Grad	Yes
Diego Vallejo	Latino/Hispanic	Race/Ethnicity	Senior	No
DJ	Chicano	Social Economic Status	Freshmen	Yes
Drew	Latinx	Race/Ethnicity	Junior	Yes
Eddie	Mexican-American	Race/Ethnicity	Senior	Yes
Edgar	Mexican-American/Latino	Social Economic Status	Junior	Yes
Emilio	N.A.	N.A.	2 nd Year Grad	N.A.
Enner	Latino	Race/Ethnicity	Senior	No
Ezekiel	Mexican-American	Social Economic Status	Junior	Yes
Felipe	Latinx/Mexican American	Race/Ethnicity	1 st Year Grad	Yes
Francisco	White/Mexican	Sexual Orientation	Junior	No
Gio	Latino	Race/Ethnicity	Junior	Yes
Güerillo	Mexican/Latinx	Sexual Orientation	Junior	Yes
Guillermo	Latino	Race/Ethnicity	Junior	No
Gustavo	N.A.	N.A.	3 rd Year Grad	N.A.
Ian	African Peruvian	Other: Formerly Incarcerated	2 nd Year*	No
Iggy	Hispanic/Latino/White	Race/Ethnicity	Freshmen	Yes
Jacob	Latino	Race/Ethnicity	1 st Year Grad	Yes
Jairo	Latino	Race/Ethnicity, Social Economic Status	1 st Year Grad	Yes
Jehova	Chicano/Latino	Race/Ethnicity	N.A.	No
Jesse	Latino/White	Other: Identity as Perceived by Others	Senior	Yes
Joe	Hispanic/Latino	N.A.	1 st Year*	Yes
Joey	Latino/Mexican	Race/Ethnicity, Religion, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Social Economic Status	N.A.	Yes
John	White/Hispanic	Other: Lifestyle	Sophomore	No
Johnny	Mexican American	Race/Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, Social Economic Status	Junior	Yes
Josh	Hispanic/Mexican	Race/Ethnicity, Sexual	Senior	No

		Orientation, Social Economic Status		
Junior	Mexican American	Race/Ethnicity	1 st Year Grad	Yes
Lupe	Hispanic/Latino/Latinx	Social Economic Status	2 st Year*	Yes
Manuel	N.A.	N.A.	Freshmen	N.A.
Marco	Mexican American	Other: College Grad	1 st Year Grad	No
Mariano	Latinx/Chicanx	Sexual Orientation	N.A.	Yes
Melvin	Mixed Race Latino	Sexual Orientation	1 st Year Grad	Yes
Michael	Hispanic/Latino	Race/Ethnicity	Sophomore	Yes
Pablo	Chicano/Mexican American	Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Social Economic Status	3 rd Year Grad	Yes
Rafi	Latino/Multiracial	Race/Ethnicity	1 st Year Grad	No
Roberto	Latino/Central American	Race/Ethnicity	3 rd Year Grad	Biological Family: Yes, Family: No
Samuel	Peruvian	Other: Identity Based on Values	1 st Year Grad	No
Saul	Mexican/Latinx	Race/Ethnicity	2 nd Year Grad	Yes
Sergio	Mexican American	Gender	1 st Year Grad	Yes
Teo	Hispanic/Latino	Other: Personality	2 nd Year*	Yes
Tiago	N.A.	N.A.	1 st Year Grad	N.A.

*Indicates a community college student.

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