Moving Forward: Examining the Success Characteristics Influencing the Academic Achievement of Hispanic Male Teens to Complete a High School Education

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Abstract Those researching the high school academic achievement of Hispanic male teens in the United States will discover that there is very little significant research identifying the positive factors that helped those who graduated from high school on time. Because of this lack of data, the purpose of this study is to broaden the research that potentially identifies the best practices of those Hispanic male teens that academically succeeded in graduating from high school and those support systems that assisted them in achieving their academic goal. This study was guided by (a) identifying the positive characteristics that influenced the academic achievement of Hispanic male teens as perceived by students, parents, teachers and administrative staff; (b) identify and compare the positive characteristic found in the national studies with those found in the City of Milwaukee; (c) compare and contrast the data revealed through the interview process with students, parents and teachers. The results from this mixed methods study (survey and interviews) identifies five positive characteristics that assist in identifying and confirming factors that other national studies have also found to be consistent with the available research. Further, the data obtained from this study represent creating possible interventions to improve the academic achievement of those students considered at risk. The data presented within this research reflects a segment of the larger population of those Hispanic male teens in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin community. By utilizing data that may be somewhat familiar from other studies, the all-important focus was on the common threads that help the students develop resilience to maintain their goal of moving forward to graduate from high school.

Keywords: hispanic, at-risk, apoyo, confianza, ganas

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1. Introduction

In February 2014 President Obama introduced a program entitled *My Brother's Keeper*. Within his introductory statements, he strongly emphasized the need for the nation as a whole to take steps to remedy the dismal national picture of the educational attainment by young men of color, and noted that the problems associated with young men of color not achieving a minimum of a high school diploma is heading towards a disaster on a national scale. For some, this is not surprising, but for others it is alarming. Gándara [1] noted the significant number in 2008 from Pew Hispanic Research Center that 39 % of Latino males drop out of high school. She further stated that those who do not continue to earn a diploma tragically see their upward mobility mixed with various stumbling blocks which come disproportionately to men of color. The scarcity of positive encouragement from home and school attributed to the lack of motivation and self-discipline needed to deal with the competition in the classroom. In many cases what was missing was the student's lack of resilience to adapt to life tasks and challenges in highly adverse conditions.

President Obama challenged Americans to not just point out the problems and continuous patterns of negative results, but rather to examine the need to reverse the negative patterns and to take action. President Obama strongly encouraged educators and researchers to develop a process to identify at-risk Hispanic adolescents early on in their educational pursuit so as to identify best practices to redirect the educational progress of these students. President Obama emphatically supported the need to broaden the research not only to Hispanic male teens but also to male teens of other ethnic groups who are listed as "at-risk". From these challenges, educators and researchers nationally [2,3,4] stated that solutions needed to be developed within the Hispanic community in order to project a better life and livelihood for the entire Hispanic community.

Additionally, Hispanic communities were encouraged to take ownership for the issues that hinder Hispanic young men from completing high school, in a way that

families, schools, and community stakeholders would come together to promote a unified direction for future educational success. By forging a partnership that could lead to developing creative solutions for positive academic results, this triad could potentially reshape educational opportunities for Hispanic male teens.

The City of Milwaukee has a very large population of Hispanic families with children in the public, private, and charter schools. What makes this study different than other studies is the selection of a purposive sample from the possible high schools in the District where the challenges identified above are examined through the lens of those students who were resilient and able to work with the support available throughout their years in high school.

By identifying the positive characteristics of Hispanic male teens that have completed their high school programs, there exists the possibility of building a framework needed to compare and contrast student populations and the individual circumstances of each student as they progress in their varied academic programs toward graduation completion. The existing educational system is not perfect, and one size does not fit all. But there are academic success factors that can be gleaned through conversations with students, parents, educators, and administrators.

According to a study by Friedenberg [3] on Hispanic youth, the research significantly identified Hispanic male high school students who dropped out of school. Data provided by the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) [5] identified problems of Hispanic teen dropouts being more critical in those top ten States where the demographics identified larger populations where Hispanics resided - California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, Arizona, New Jersey, Colorado, New Mexico, Georgia [6].

Ronald A. Williams, Vice-President of *Advocacy*, in his Forward in, "The Education Experience of Young Men of Color: Capturing the Student Voice" [7] stated:

> Though active engagement by …policymakers and the involvement of the community are important, they alone cannot provide all the change that we seek for young men of color. They must be accompanied by educational reforms that ensure that all students graduate from high school and are college and career ready ([7], p. 85).

Williams further stated that the utilization of the best strategies needs to be accompanied by quality educators and resources that provide ongoing support and retention through the high school years. He further stated that it would be of little service to begin a process of support unless there was an ongoing backup system to ensure each student reaching their goal with minimal disruption. Most importantly was Williams' closing remark where he emphasized that

> "…researchers and institutions must be committed to conducting more studies that strengthen the understanding of the challenges facing young men of color and then provide evidence-based SOLUTIONS to these challenges...research must focus on SOLUTIONS that can be used to successfully increase graduation rates among young men of color" ([7], p. 85).

By comparing the various studies and contrasting the processes conducted by various researchers, one of the objectives of this study was to identify possible initiatives that direct further research in a more positive direction that identify positive patterns and outcomes for students. The challenge presented by President Obama and Ronald Williams for "scholars to investigate and provide solutions that address the issues affecting the performance and outcomes of young men of color" is the major impetus for promoting this study ([7], p. 85).

As previously mentioned, the majority of the literature available on this topic focused on the underachievement of the Hispanic male teens. This study presented an examination of 12th graders who have utilized best practices, support from family, support from teacher and counselors and those resources available in the community in order to successfully graduate from high school. Additionally, this study identified the positive outcomes of various research studies (local, regional, and national) that created positive outcomes and strategies to assist young men of color to complete the academic requirements for high school graduation.

2. Literature Review

The last decade has seen a great number of academic studies addressing the pressing reality that men of color, Hispanic males, in particular, lag significantly in achieving academic success. The literature consistently reflects that young men of color share many of the same barriers and obstacles that hinder their academic achievement specifically during high school. The everyday challenges which the young teens of color experience in the early years of their education intensifies over the four year period of time in high school, as evidenced by studies and testing results in Mathematics and Reading by the National Assessment of Education Progress [8] and the data provided by the Schott Foundation [9] on national high school graduation rates on male teens of color.

The statistics presented on the Hispanic male teen regarding the achievement gap have consistently shown Hispanic male teens struggling to make significant progress in comparison to other ethnic groups. Studies on the achievement gap conducted by United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [10,11,12], additionally recommend the need to look in other areas of the students' educational programming in order to assess the potential of each student at various levels of the educational progress. Saenz and Ponjuan [13] noted that the underachievement of Hispanic male teens needed to be seen within the context of "a crisis with untold implications for the future economic prosperity of America's Latina/o community" (p. 4).

According to the United States Census Department 2000, the population of Hispanics (Latinos) living in the United States was 35.2 million which represented approximately 12.5% of the 281.4 million people reported in the census. The data from the 2010 census reported 50.5 million Hispanics (Latinos) living in the United States which represented 16% of the total United States population of 308.7 people.

Significantly, the population increase in Hispanics on a national level also changed the diversity within cities, neighborhoods and the neighborhood schools. The overall increase of the Hispanic population in the United States demanded many schools throughout the country to

re-evaluate and implement strategies to meet the unique needs of their student body. As the diversity within the schools around the country grew, so did the complexity and need for teaching students outside the traditional forms that exist today [14]. The data reported a need to address options that would dramatically increase outcomes that put students on track to personal success. Creating pedagogy and strategies to instruct the diverse number of students in the classroom meant a complete reevaluation of educational systems to incorporate an innovative multicultural dimension that addressed and integrated African-American, Hispanic, Asian and Euro-American traditions and culture.

The present study was driven by the need to expand the literature focusing on the academic success of those Hispanic male teens graduating from high school, and the characteristics that contributed to the academic success of Hispanic male teens. Moreover, the focus of this study was on Hispanic male teens because the Hispanic people comprise the largest minority group of the population in the City of Milwaukee.

Given the significant growth of the Hispanic population around the country and the increased number of Hispanic youth in our schools, Hess [15] strongly suggested that it was critical to identify modifiable influences on academic success for Hispanic adolescents today. Results found in such studies would support research in those parts of the United States with a high demographic population of Hispanic families with children experiencing similar demographic and educational trends.

Very little research has been conducted on the types of strategies that constitute "best practices" for teaching Hispanic boys. Many programs have designed curriculum, created mentoring programs, implemented counseling and recreational activities after school without clear compelling research to support the interventions. According to Noguera, [10], many of the initiatives were carried out by "sincere and well-meaning individuals who desired to 'save' young men of color" but in many cases, did not have a clear sense of how to approach their work" (p. 11). Though much was learned from these endeavors, there still remained the problem of the underachievement of Hispanic males at a high rate.

There does exist a formidable number of individuals and organizations who are committed to search for strategies to confront the problem of the underachievement of Hispanic male teens. The support and creation of initiatives from the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), National Education Association (NEA), Pew Research Center, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), National Community for Latino Leadership (NCLL), National Council of LaRaza (NCLR), and the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (USHCC), are but a few of those organizations committed to promote academic success for Hispanic children at all levels.

The investment of time and talent directed at improving the lives of all students, especially male teen students of color, has moved in a direction that offers comprehensive options for parents and students such as after-school programs for homework help, parent classes for English as a Second language (ESL), employment assistance and ongoing education. Through collaborative, sensitive planning, cultural understanding, and community outreach, organizations have put in place measures to improve and reinforce the collective consciousness of educators, administrators, parents, and others who care about the academic success of the nation's Hispanic male teens.

In their study, Delgado-Gaitan [2] asserts that parents provide children with the emotional support that encourages them to value education. The common thread within Delgado-Gaitan's study [16] was that parents cared about their children's education. However, the ways in which they exercised their roles varied, especially in reference to parent-child interactions involving homework, which were directly related to parents' cultural knowledge about school, and their availability to be physically present in the school.

The constant mobility of families is a major factor of concern in providing a continuous program of academic success for Hispanic families. The problems exist not only in major cities but also in towns where Hispanic populations relocate for work and the children are matriculated in school for short periods of time and moved from one school to the next with their families. Research by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine [17] found within the study by Stephen Raudenbush that the context within which families move, is a useful predictor of whether or not the outcome would be detrimental to the student's academic progress. Children in families who were economically stressed and downwardly mobile additionally experienced other risks factors such as family disruption, prolonged economic stress, and lack of social and community resources. Raudenbush [17] further states that when schools experience a high rate of mobility from students during the school year, achievement levels diminish, especially at the high school level. In these cases, it becomes very difficult to develop an individual learning plan for a student needing to complete the academic work required for a specific grade level. Much time is lost while student makes accultural adjustments to their new environment and the various methods of teaching that may be different from their previous school.

In summary, the majority of literature addressing the academic achievement of Hispanic male has documented the students' underachievement in high school [18,19,20,21]. It was the intention of this research to explore data that supported efforts by Hispanic male teens in urban schools utilizing support from specific institutional structures and strategies that have been successful in completing a high school program of education. This study emphasized the efforts and challenges of students who have succeeded in environments repeatedly disadvantaged by structural inequalities. Additionally, the research presented, identified and explored advocacies and strategies utilized by Hispanic families to maintain family unity, building a strong sense of desire and confidence (*ganas*), maintenance of cultural values and development of a strong support system (*apoyo*), and mutual trust (*confianza*) in the structures experienced within the United States educational system. Furthermore, this study compared the positive characteristics found in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to those presented on a national level found in the literature review.

3. Methodology

The approach used for this research was a Mixed Methods approach using a Survey (Quantitative) as an initial data collection method, and face-to-face Interviews (Qualitative) to offer additional information that would not be available through the survey alone.

The pilot survey was completed in April 2015 and administered to Hispanic male seniors at a large multicultural high school. The survey was administered a second time in May 2016 to a different group of Hispanic male seniors at the same high school with additional interviews with students, parents, administration, and staff.

The survey was divided into five sections: 1) family, 2) teachers/mentors/counselors, 3) religious affiliation, 4) peers/neighborhood and community support, and 5) social agencies support. The survey contained a total of 28 questions. By using a Quantitative Survey and Qualitative Interviews to obtain data, triangulation allowed for a greater accuracy of interpretation of the surveys and the interviews which Gruba [22] states give a cross-validation of the data collected.

This study focused solely on Hispanic 12th grade male teens and their experiences in high school and those influences that assisted them in graduating from high school. Many Hispanic male teens faced socioeconomic challenges, limited or no parental involvement, a lack of diversity in the teaching pedagogies, and lack of equitable resources within their schools. Many Hispanic male students within the demographics of Milwaukee Public Schools face these similar issues throughout grades 9-12.

47 Hispanic males who were in the 12th grade were invited to participate in the research. This group contained Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Of those 47, only 36 (77%) completed the written survey. 14 volunteered to participate in a face-to-face interview. The research was begun in the second semester so as to track those 36 students with 90% attendance who were on track to graduate in June. The 36 students who agreed to complete the paper survey were gathered in a large classroom with the opportunity to ask questions or clarifications concerning the survey.

The survey contained 28 statements to which the students responded using a 5-point *Likert Scale* (a-Strongly Agree, b-Agree, c-Disagree, d-Strongly Disagree, e-Not Applicable) to provide information identifying those positive persons or factors that supported their pursuit to complete high school. At the end of the survey, the students were given the option to voluntarily participate in face-to-face interviews. Of the 36 students, 14 volunteered to participate in the interviews.

Each of the students was interviewed with the same set of 7 prepared questions. The interviews were recorded in English and transcribed by the researcher. Additionally, interviews were conducted with the school Principal (Cuban), School Social Worker (Mexican) and one parent (Mexican). The parent's interview was recorded in Spanish and translated by the researcher into English.

The data received from the completion of the survey and information provided from the face-to-face interviews described a wide range of information pertaining to the identity of Hispanic subgroups, involvement in activities in and out of school, living arrangement within the family, and positive and negative influences within the family, community, and school. The descriptive methodology allowed for a better understanding of the support systems which the students found most beneficial toward graduating from high school.

The criteria for analyzing the positive factors toward the success of the students to graduate from high school varied due to demographics, cultural differences, amount of geographical movement of families, length of time students were enrolled in school and the feeling of acceptance within the school community. The criteria were somewhat broad considering a full range of human activities and interventions from various resources outside the family unit. All students were challenged with developmental tasks that began during childhood and continued during adolescence [8,23,24]. For educators, counselors, and administration there was a need to provide best practices to encourage students to learn and develop the resilience needed to reach their goal of graduating from high school. In order to attain and maintain the resilience this same group needed to provide opportunities for connection, consistency, and commitment throughout the four years in high school.

Responses from the survey and the face-to-face interviews indicated significantly that a strong relationship existed that supported how the five positive characteristics contributed to the increased educational achievement of those Hispanic male teens who participated in this research. Additionally, this research was significant as it provided those participating in the research opportunities to relate their everyday experiences from the time they entered high school, and how those events impacted their personal academic achievement. The students were able to express how their life experiences, in and out of the classroom, assisted in creating personal goals and values which directed their success.

To confirm the internal reliability of the survey instrument each of the five variables was calculated separately. The overall alpha reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) for the 25-item student survey was .952 which is >.07. For each of the subscale variables was: Family Support - .883; Teacher/Counselor/Mentor Support - .707; Neighborhood/Peers/Community Support - .781; Religious Affiliation Support - .918; Social Service Agency Support - .881. Each of the calculated values was >.07 and was acceptable to determine reliability [24].

Finally, the face-to-face interviews of the students provided detailed information regarding their experiences in high school, as well as the support received from various people. Those students that volunteered to be interviewed welcomed the opportunity to talk about themselves and about their personal experiences in and out of school. The voices of these students were transcribed from recordings in order to compare and contrast information from the 14 respondents about their personal experiences at home, school and among their peers. The interviews with the students and parents provided additional insights and support regarding the background of the participants, their home, and school settings, and the experiences of the student and family within their responses in defining how congruent were the findings with reality [26].
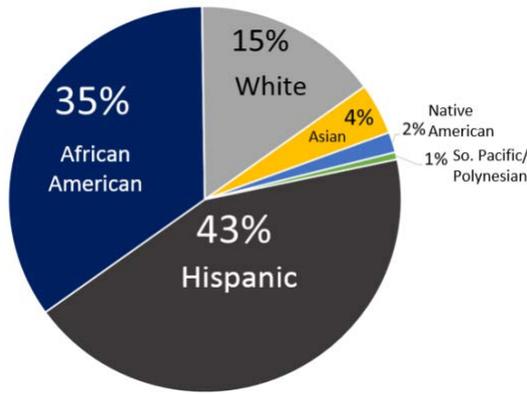
Figure 1. Demographics of Southwest High School – Milwaukee, WI

The site of the research is one of the largest multicultural high schools in Milwaukee Public School District - *Southwest High School* (a pseudonym). Total enrollment 2015-2016 was 1,735. 77% of the student body is classified as economically disadvantaged. The demographic breakdown: Hispanic 43.4% (753), African American 34.7% (602), White 15.3% (266), Asian (Vietnamese & Hmong) 4.3% (75), Native American Indian 1.7% (29), Other 0.6% (10) (WISEdash Public Portal, Wisconsin DPI, 2015-2016).

This high school was selected because of a large number of Hispanic male teens in the senior class, and the willingness of the administration to provide students in the

Spring of 2016 to administer the survey to the 47 Hispanic male seniors registered in the school who were on target to graduate from high school. Another factor that played into the selection of this high school was the wide range of multiethnic students enrolled in the high school that provided a variance of feedback because of interaction with a wider variety of ethnic students, both male and female, who were also successful in completing their requirements to graduate from high school. The school culture developed by the administration, faculty, and staff supported all students to value the importance of school attendance, develop a resilience to work hard and to take advantage of the support by teachers, counselors, and staff to reach their goal of graduation.

4. Findings

What positive characteristics influence the academic achievement of Hispanic male teens as they seek to successfully complete a high school education as perceived by students, parents, teachers and administrative staff?

This is a summary of the information obtained from each of the five constructs on the survey: 1) family support, 2) teacher/mentors/counselors support, 3) neighborhood/peers and community support, 4) religious affiliations support, 5) social service agency support.
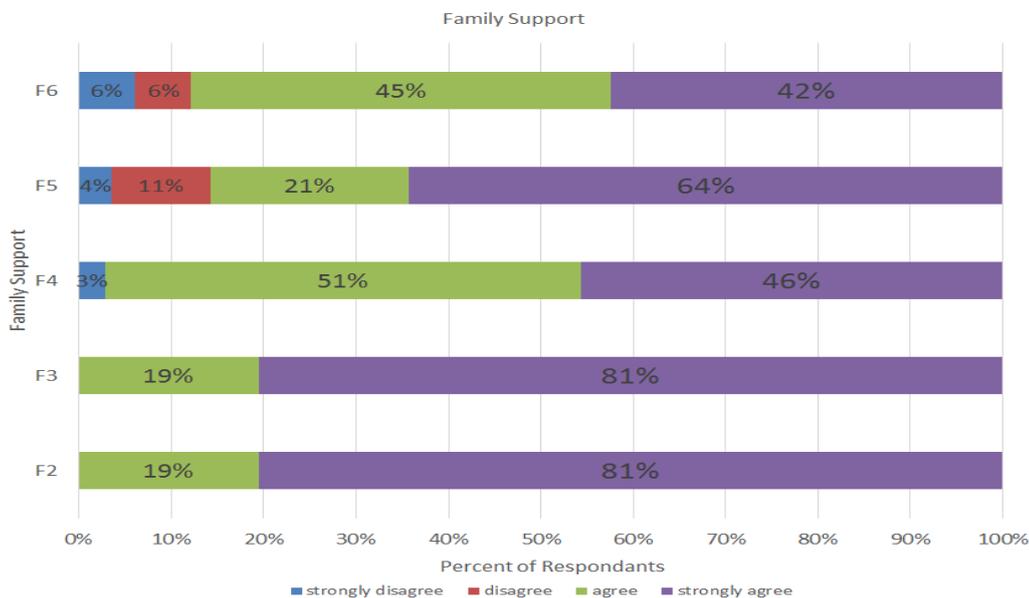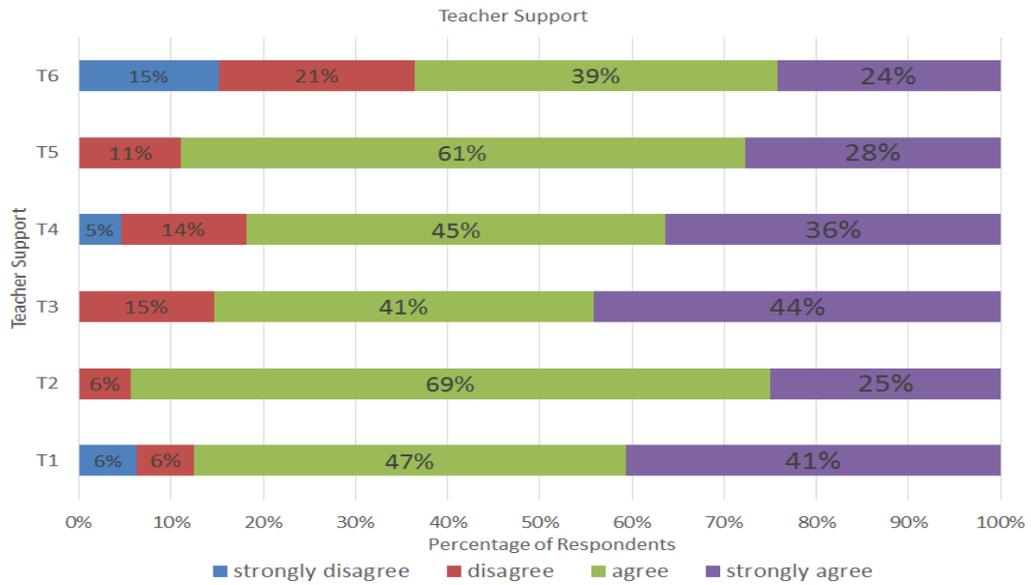

Five coded statements beginning with the letter "F" were included in the survey under the section of *Family Support*. F2 = Father and Mother, F3 = Brothers and Sisters, F4 = Grandparents, F5 = Uncles and Aunts, F6 = "Extended" Family

Figure 2. Family Support – Bar Graph

Responses by students to statements F2 and F3 indicated a significantly strong support by two family groupings with 81% of the respondents stating that Father/Mother/Sister/Brother strongly supported them to stay on task to complete courses leading to high school graduation. The remaining 19% responded to the statements F2 and F3 agreed that there was some support for their academic success leading to graduation. Statements F5 and F6 contained responses from students indicating that they strongly disagreed that uncles/aunts and extended family members influenced their academic progress to complete high school.

Responses by students to statements F2, F3, F4, F5, and F6 reflected a standard deviation of .616 and a mean of 3.45 on a 4.0 scale.
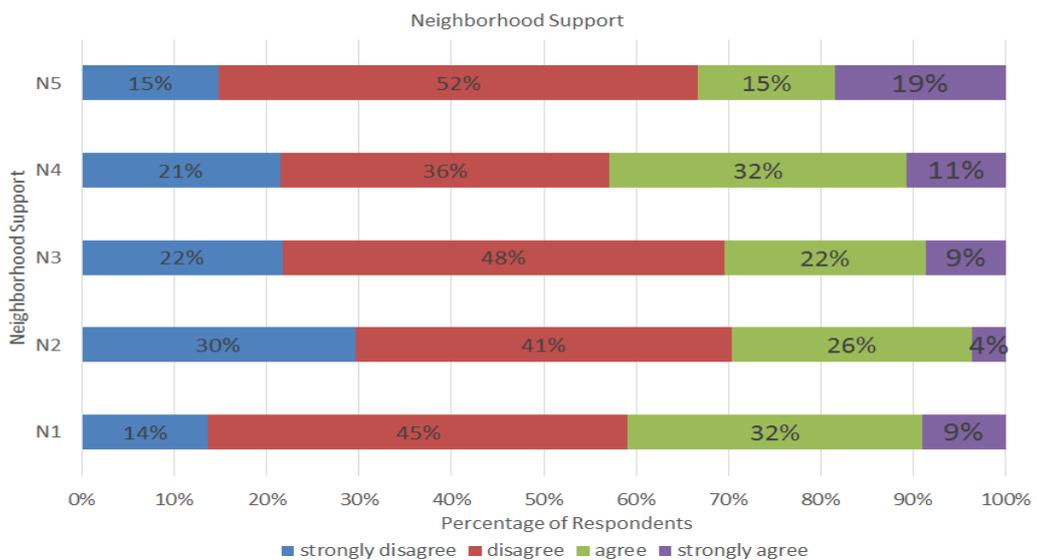
Six coded statements beginning with the letter "T" were included in the survey under the section of *Teacher/Mentor/Counselor Support*. T1 = Teacher support, T2 = Counselor support, T3 = Coaches/Advisors, T4 = Mentor support, T5 = Teacher/Parent contact, T6 = Counselor/Parent contact.

Figure 3. Teacher/Mentor/Counselor Support – Bar Graph

Responses by students to statements T3 (Advisors) and T1 (Teachers) indicated a significantly strong support by faculty or staff groupings with 43.5% of the respondents stated that Coaches/Advisors and Teachers strongly supported them to stay on task to complete courses leading to high school graduation. Each of the responses by students contained a significant amount of support as indicated on the graph under statements T1 through T4. Also significant was the responses to statements T1 and T4 that on average 15.5% of the students disagreed that they received support to stay focused on completing their high school education, and the 5.5% who stated that they strongly disagreed that Teachers and Mentors supported them in the completion of their high school program.

Also significant in the responses from the students to statements T4 and T5 indicated a strong agreement that teachers (89%) and counselors (63%) made contact with parents throughout the school year. This is an important factor to consider as it reflects the commitment of the school to develop a network of communication where parents and school continue to promote building a school climate that involves parents working together for the betterment of the student.

Responses by students to statements T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, and T6 reflected a standard deviation of .526 and a mean of 3.10 on a 4.0 scale.
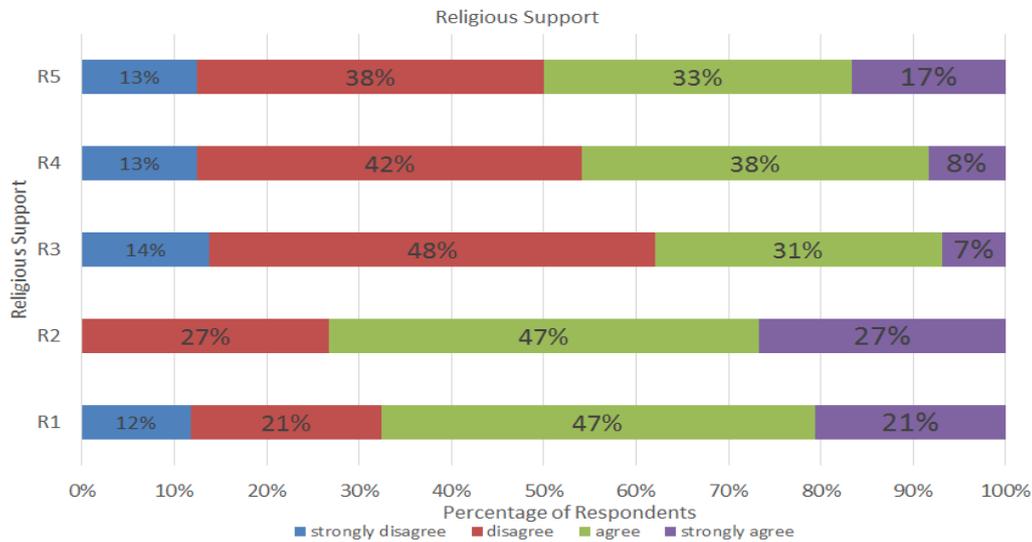

Five coded statements beginning with the letter "N" were included in the survey under the section of *Neighborhood/Peer/Community Support*. N1 = Specific people in the neighborhood, N2 = Rec Centers/Community Outreach Center/Sports Programs, N3 = Tutoring programs, N4 = University or City Sponsored Academic programs, N5 = Neighborhood computer centers, job opportunity training.

Figure 4. Neighborhood/Peer/Community Support – Bar Graph

Responses by students to statements N1 through N5 indicated a significantly strong disagreement that the neighborhood provides support toward making progress to graduate from high school. From the responses within each of

the five statements, there is no correlation between academic achievement and the neighborhood in which they reside. The small percentile of students who indicated that they received support from people in their neighborhood or their peers was supported by information received in the face-to-face interviews.

Responses by students to statements N1, N2, N3, N4, and N5 reflected a standard deviation of .636 and a mean of 2.40 on a 4.0 scale.
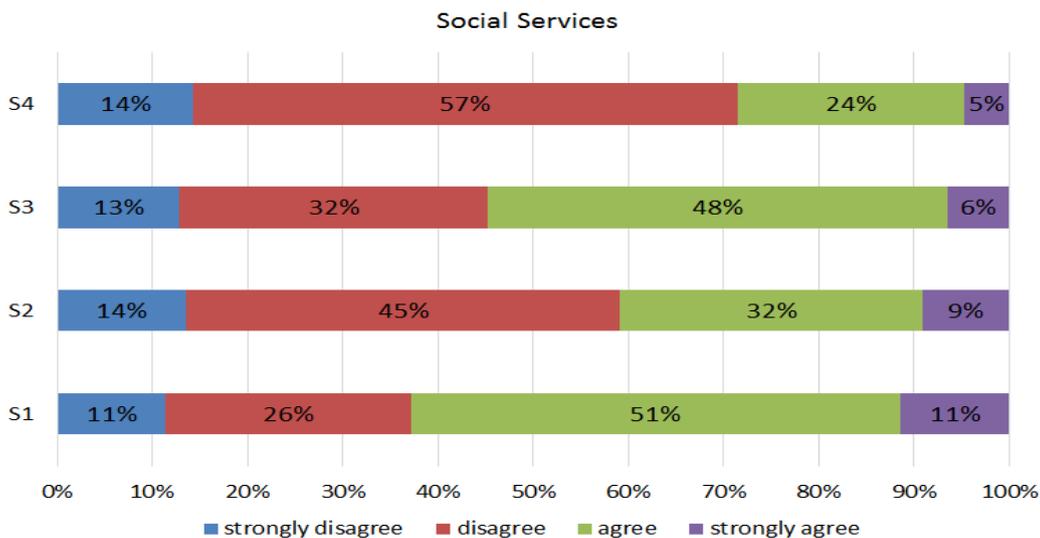

Five coded statements beginning with the letter "R" were included in the survey under the section of *Religious Affiliation Support.* R1 = Family members in Church, R2 = Family actively involved in Church, R3 = Student involved in Church groups, R4 = Minister Support, R5 = Youth Minister Support.

Figure 5. Religious Affiliation Support – Bar Graph

Responses by students to statements R1 and R2 indicated a significantly strong agreement that the family affiliation and involvement in Church community is significantly important. From the responses of the students to statements R3 through R5, there does not seem to be a need for church involvement in an organized Church group. From the responses within each of the five statements, there is no correlation between academic achievement and being affiliated in a formalized Church group.

Responses from the face-to-face interviews confirm that the parents are involved in Church activities but the students are not as evidenced by the statements in the interview section of this chapter. The small percentile of students in R3 through R5 who indicated that they received support from their ministers and youth ministers is supported by information received in the face-to-face interviews.

Responses by students to statements R1, R2, R3, R4, and R5, reflects a standard deviation of .746 and a mean of 2.54 on a 4.0 scale.

Four coded statements beginning with the letter "S" were included in the survey under the section of *Social Services Support.* S1 = Receive tutorial services, S2 = Receives assistance for academic testing and ACT prep, S3 = Receives personal counseling to deal with crisis intervention, S4 = Receives support/mentoring to achieve educational goals.

Figure 6. Social Service Agency Support – Bar Graph

Responses by students to statement S1 (tutorial service) and S3 (crisis intervention counseling) indicated a significantly strong agreement that assistance given by social services was significantly important toward achieving educational goals. From the responses of the students to statement S2 (testing assistance) and S4 (mentoring), there does not seem to be a need for social services support for these areas of educational programming. From the responses within each of the four statements, there is no correlation between academic achievement and assistance given by social service agencies toward completion of a high school program.

Responses from the face-to-face interviews confirm that "the parents are receiving assistance from social services in the form of child care, rental assistance, medical assistance for children, food vouchers, and reduced lunch assistance at school". The small percentile of students in S1 through S4 who indicated that they received support from social service agencies is supported from information received in the face-to-face interviews.

Responses by students to statements S1, S2, S3, and S4 reflects a standard deviation of .694 and a mean of 2.29 on a 4.0 scale.

5. Discussion of Findings

The literature review presented in this study identified characteristics that have been positively linked to the support of Hispanic male teens to graduate from high school. Every Hispanic community, regardless of resources, contains examples of Hispanic male teens who achieve in school, regardless of social disadvantages. The development of a partnership between students, parents, teachers, and administration focused on developing and empowering the Hispanic male students to overcome adverse socio-economic difficulties in their pursuit of graduating from high school. It was important to understand the process of how those that had completed the requirements for graduation in order to replicate a portion of those best practices, strategies, and behaviors that were utilized to succeed in and out of school. Of major importance to this study was to provide data that would identify how these students created productive relationships, avert advances from their peers and other demands to quit school, and prosper in an environment cynically disadvantaged by structural inequalities [26]. This study presented those students who aspired to achieve academically with support provided by families, teachers, and educational opportunities that opened doors to future growth and success.

The study determined that there were five characteristics found within a large body of the literature review presented in this research. Additionally, some of the research only presented two or three of the characteristics and made inferences regarding other characteristics, i.e., single parenting, teenage pregnancy, homelessness, poverty of the family, gang membership influence.

The data received from the completion of the survey and information provided from the face-to-face interviews described a wide range of information pertaining to the identity of Hispanic subgroups, involvement in activities in and out of school, living arrangement within the family, and positive and negative influences within the family, community, and school. The descriptive methodology allowed for a better understanding of the support systems which the students found most beneficial toward reaching their academic goal of graduating from high school.

In pursuing the trustworthiness (validity) of the study, this research utilized the four constructs of Guba [22] and the studies of Creswell [27] to identify the following issues: Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To address these issues, a meeting was conducted with the Principal, Counselor and Social Worker in order to inform them of the process, as well as to gain possible background information about the students, especially from their interaction with students and parents over the years of enrollment at the high school.

To address the issues related to transferability the researcher was aware that the findings of one project are specific to the small number population sample who participated in the study, and it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other populations or situations. Each of the students and each of the parents provided a multidimensional description in responding to the questions for the interview. Given that the survey and the interviews could be conducted at another high school that enrolled a high number of Hispanic males, there might be some overlapping in the findings, but most assuredly, they would not be identical due to possible changes in location or demographics within a community.
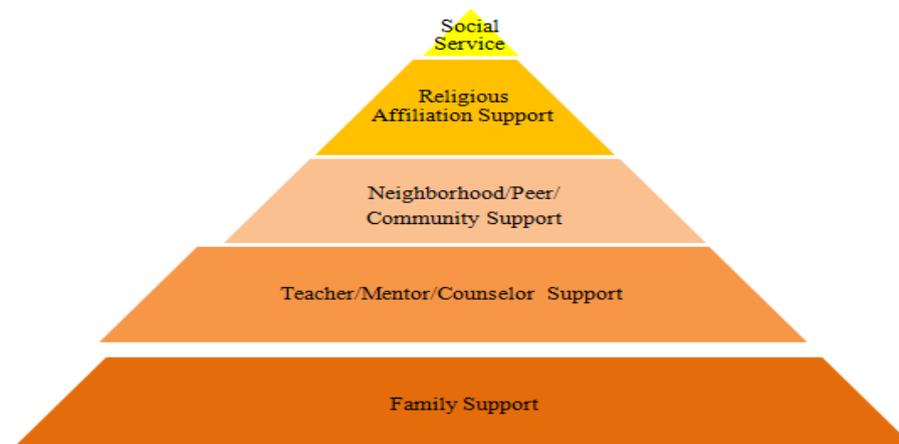

Figure 7. Five variables that contribute to the achievement of Hispanic male teens to graduate from high school

Table 1. 2015-2016 Graduation Statistics for 7 High Schools with a High Enrollment of Hispanic Males

School	01	02	03	04	05	06	07
Total number of students in the high school 2015-2016	881	853	367	1,744	928	1,311	1,357
Total number of male students 2015-2016	493	544	163	991	513	615	717
Total number of senior male students 2015-2016	111	84	0	152	72	138	90
Total number of Hispanic students 2015-2016	52	133	355	755	278	663	716
Total number of Hispanic senior male students 2015-2016	21	18	0	47	28	88	47
Total number of Hispanic senior male students who graduated in 2016	20	16	0	38	23	85	28
Graduation % 2015-2016	95.2%	88.8%	0%	80.8%	82.1%	96.5%	59.5%

In order to ensure the dependability of the study, the processes within the study were reported in detail, thereby enabling the researcher to maintain data and documentation and using member check to verify the content of the interviews and the responses of the surveys in order to gain a thorough understanding of their effectiveness in answering the research questions. Participants were asked to verify for accuracy and authenticity the researcher's understanding and interpretation of his understanding of their experiences from their responses. The close ties between transferability and dependability can be viewed through the overlapping research procedure found in the individual interviews. The bilingual ability of the researcher to communicate in English and Spanish, as well as well as a lived bicultural experience as a Hispanic male, added to the dependability of the present research study.

Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [28] consider that a key criterion for confirmability is the extent to which the researcher admits his or her own predispositions. To the extent that the researcher was seeking external reliability for this study, each of the steps in documented in the output from the survey and interviews. The researcher was explicit and was aware of possible assumptions, values, and biases that may affect the findings and the responses to the research questions. The data was reviewed by five professors at the graduate level in the fields of Psychology, Anthropology, Statistical Research, Social Studies, and Philosophy.

Although the number of students who participated in the survey and interviews sufficiently represented the population in order to respond to the research questions, including a larger number in the sample size would have increased the confidence level of the responses. The researcher chose this high school because of the diverse demographics of the student body beyond White, African-American and Hispanic students.

6. Summary

The Hispanic population is the largest growing minority population in the United States today. There are growing educational concerns as to the educational achievement of Hispanic students, especially male teens. Though the majority of the research has focused on the negative aspects of the underachievement of the Hispanic male teens, there has been some effort to redirect the efforts to examine the positive characteristic of those Hispanic male teens that have successfully completed high school and graduated. These studies have examined the best practices

and influences that this group of teens have indicated as being the factors, which assisted them in a positive manner. Supporting the direction and implementation of initiatives that will assist these students to graduate from high school will challenge the present structure of education where in many cases does not consider the cultural experiences that these students bring the school and community. Additionally, the students, parents, and local community will need to cooperatively work together to make this reality come true in order to demonstrate to the larger educational community the value of utilizing practices that include diverse approaches to education in the 21st century.

There exist potential limitations in this study that may affect the generalizability of the data analysis. In that the researcher was a person of Hispanic descent, there exists the consideration that data provided from the interviews were more readily given; in that the interviewer was able to communicate bilingually and set a comfortable tone with the Hispanic students. Had the interviewer been other than a Hispanic person does bring the consideration whether that same results would have been obtained from the responses.

A second potential limitation was not knowing if the terminology used in the survey would be understood by all the Hispanic male teens who participated in this study. Some of the terms in the survey may not have been completely understood by all the students and may have slanted their responses due to misunderstanding what the statements were asking. This did raise some concerns as to whether the ability of the students to communicate effectively their responses in a language that may not have been their primary language. Omar [29] states that in many cases, for non-native English speakers the meaning of some words may differ between various cultures. It is unclear if offering the students an opportunity to ask questions about the statements would have produced a different response than the one they selected with their initial knowledge of the statement.

A third potential limitation was the low number of parents who responded to participate in the interviews. The students responded that their parents were not available due to work responsibilities. The researcher offered opportunities other than after school for parents to meet for the interviews. Additionally, varied locations for the interviews were also offered.

A fourth potential limitation was that this study provided a sampling of students from one the high school that enrolls a high population of Hispanic male teens; however, these students do not represent the responses of all senior Hispanic male teens in the Milwaukee Public

School District. Table 1 provides data reflecting the enrollment figures for 2015-2016 indicating the number of Hispanic male teens at six other public high schools enrolling a high number of Hispanic students in the District.

Many schools are attempting to identify best practices that they can implement in their school to address the academic achievement of teen males of color. This challenge within large schools with diverse enrollments does not give many opportunities to specialize in meeting the needs of a few. Most school districts are working very hard to meet the needs of their special education programs, of which some Hispanic male teens have been included because of their inability to speak English. This study became more aware of this activity from the interviews with student transferring from different schools later in their high school years, as well as students coming from other Hispanic countries which their primary language is Spanish. [30]

From the student interviews, it was also learned that many of these students came to Milwaukee, Wisconsin because of other family members already living in the city, as well as extended family and friends. Students found themselves in adversarial positions soon after they began school. At times the students spoke of enrolling in a school near their home but later transferred to another school that they felt a sense of isolation in not knowing anyone. Although the mission of *Southwest High School* stressed "forging partnerships with family and community that guarantee a quality education and celebrate diversity through recognition and support of all students", the students did not experience this climate of acceptance. Over time, the combination of balancing responsibilities at home, work, and personal time with various friends, the students acclimated re-aligned their goals to "walk the stage" and get on with their lives.

This study identified positive characteristics related to the dependability, personal discipline, resilience, and positive study habits that explain academic achievement in spite of adversity. It would seem of major importance to school administrators, educators, parents/guardians and the community in general to understand how such qualities develop and how they can be encouraged for all students. Finn and Rock [31] encourage further study that can obtain knowledge and best practices "that can be incorporated into more complete models of resilience and can inform attempts to foster resilience in the school setting" (p. 321).

It is most clear from the results of this study that academic support provided by parents and teachers may be extremely important for students at risk. From this study, the researcher was able to identify from those involved in this study how each of the positive characteristics contributed to the establishment of social capital through the students' developing social networks that facilitated their access to school and community resources.

Similarly, by developing informational networks within intergenerational resources the students were able to broaden their social capital by interacting with individuals in the home (parents, relatives and, extended family members), school (teachers, counselors, and staff) and community (mentors, coaches, significant business leaders). Finally, this study, along with the data obtained from the literature review, emphasized the importance of working collectively in order for the students to see how the community as a whole placed a high value on completing a high school education as a basis for further personal development, as well as career readiness.

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