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Developing Latina/o Leaders: Examining leadership and civic outcomes of Latina/o college students at four-year colleges and universities

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Miguel Lopez

2017

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Developing Latina/o Leaders: Examining leadership and civic outcomes of Latina/o college students at four-year colleges and universities

by

Miguel Lopez

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor Sylvia Hurtado, Chair

Researchers, institutional leaders, government policy makers, and leading foundations note the significant role an educated Latina/o population plays in the nation, future workforce, and democracy. This longitudinal study examines the experiences in U.S. colleges and universities that prepare Latina/o students for participation in American democracy and roles in communities and across industries. This study controls background characteristics and predispositions to determine the effect of Latina/o college experiences on civic awareness, commitment of becoming a community leader, and leadership development. Guided by Astin's Involvement Theory and Nora, Barlow and Crisp's Student/Institution Engagement Model, this study employed logistic and multivariate regression analyses on a national sample of 2,164

Latina/o college students who were first-time, full-time freshmen at four-year colleges and universities. The 2004 CIRP Freshmen and 2008 College Senior Surveys were merged with IPEDS institutional data for the study.

Findings indicate that college cross racial interactions, attending racial/cultural awareness workshops, and participating in political demonstrations predict Latina/o participation in ethnic/racial student organizations, all of which also predict increases in the personal goal of becoming a community leader. Other predictors of community leadership values are associated with negative cross racial interactions, leadership ability, and performing volunteer work. Civic awareness is fostered by attending a Hispanic Serving Institution, positive cross racial interactions, attending cultural/racial awareness workshops, social agency, and confidence in leadership ability. Latina/os' leadership development (self-ratings change) is associated with voting in student elections, positive cross racial interactions, attending cultural/racial awareness workshops, social agency, and performing volunteer work. In terms of differences among Latina/os, non-native English speakers are more likely to join racial/ethnic organizations, show high civic awareness, and commitment to becoming a community leader. The lower engagement of native English speakers is an area of concern since they have potential for civic leadership. In another area of concern, Latinas are less likely than males to show increases in their leadership ability self-ratings in college. This suggests challenges remain in terms of increasing Latina leadership. The paradox is Latinas are involved in increasing numbers and capacities in student organizations and leadership roles, yet this does not translate to increase Latina leadership.

The study extends previous findings indicating diversity-oriented college activities and experiences have a significant and positive effect on student social and civic outcomes. Implications for research, policy and practice are discussed.

The dissertation of Miguel Lopez is approved.

Walter R. Allen

Mitchell J. Chang

Leobardo F. Estrada

Sylvia Hurtado, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2017

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, and family of friends. In particular, my parents who instilled in me a strong work-ethic and the value of an education. And, to my grandma. She was a critical part of my life, my formative years, and early education. She saw me walk at a graduation ceremony for this dissertation before her passing – and before I was done. I am done now, and I am happy.

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I share this accomplishment with everyone who has played a role in my development and success. I am very, very grateful.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Much has been said and documented about the role an educated Latino\* citizenry will have and make in the future of the United States. Multiple stakeholders realize the vitality of the U.S. economy, future workforce, and democracy will be influenced and in large part be dependent upon the country's young and growing Hispanic population (White House, 2011; Kelly, Schneider, and Carey, 2010; Nielsen, 2012; Santiago and Solis, 2012; Gandara and Contreras, 2009; Tienda and Mitchell 2006). While college participation, completion rates and strategies have been central to policy discussions and institutional foci for the nation's growing Hispanic community, given the projected transformational demographic changes amongst this group in the U.S., it is dually important to consider broader outcomes and implications of college-educated Latinos' contributions.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of its more than 1,200 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges, community colleges, and universities of every type and size, released a report entitled, *Reclaiming the Civic Mission of Higher Education* (2012) at the White House, in Washington, D.C. This landmark report, was released at a time when the country may be at one of its most polarized times, politically, and still recovering from the biggest economic downturn since the nation's Great Depression, that the Obama Administration worked to resolve. The report uncovered concern that American higher education is not preparing all college graduates to participate successfully in our democracy nor the economy. Further, it pushed back against the prevailing national dialogue that limits the

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\* The terms Hispanic, Chicano and Latina/o, and Latino are used interchangeably throughout this manuscript. In the case of references and other citations, the terms will be shown as used by original author.



mission of higher education primarily to workforce development—reminding many, about the other missions of American higher education, including civic learning and democratic engagement.

At the time of release, AAC&U President Carol Geary Schneider stated:

“The heart of a vibrant democracy is an educated, engaged citizens who are able to make wise and responsible choices for their families, their communities, and our democracy. America’s colleges and universities must play a central role in educating every college student to become these engaged citizens and to help reinvigorate our dispirited democracy.”

Further, also at the event, then-U.S. Under Secretary of Education Martha Kanter, whose office was responsible for the Postsecondary Education portfolio for the United States, added:

“We need graduates who are well-grounded in the values, principles, and ideals of democracy that formed our great nation—citizens who will become active participants in the lives of their communities, people who will help our country prosper socially, economically, and culturally now and for future generations.”

This study aimed to examine higher education experiences that develop Latina/o students’ civic awareness, their commitment to becoming a community leader, and their leadership development. Tied together, these outcomes identify college environments, activities, and experiences that enhance Latino college student’s civic development and foundation for democratic engagement.

Research has found that Latina/os experience college environments differently due to entering student characteristics and the characteristics of the institution they attend (Hurtado, Saenz, Santos & Cabrera, 2008; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005). While the number of Latina/o students attending American colleges and universities has risen in the past two decades, the U.S. Latino college student population continues to be very underrepresented relative to their population age group (Hurtado, et al., 2008). In many areas of the country, even in those regions

where Hispanics are a higher percentage of the population (e.g. Texas and California), they still are not equally represented in higher education opportunities. It has been well documented that the lack of representation has direct and indirect effects on the student experience and the larger campus climate (Oseguera, Locks, and Vega, 2009; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, and Oseguera, 2008; Strayhorn, 2008; Hurtado and Ponjuan, 2005; Hurtado, Carter, and Spuler, 1996), as well as a nation that could greatly benefit from participation of Latina/o talent (White House, 2011).

College activities and environments have been shown to play a critical role in the college student experience (Astin, 1993). One avenue for student support upon arriving in college is through the many on-campus student organizations on college campuses today, including racial and ethnic student organizations. Still, decades later, empirical research on ethnic student organizations is limited in higher education literature; as Montelongo (2003) and others assert, there is relatively limited theory and research on how race and ethnicity affects student involvement in college and student organizations (White, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Treviño, 1992). In fact, Hurtado & Carter (1997) found that Latina/o college experiences lead one to question Tinto's theory of integration – that involvement in different types of organizations and activities generate different levels of sense of belonging among high achieving Latina/os. The research notes that certain activities may hinder or further be alienating to students, while others help break down the larger campus to one that is more familiar and familial, and can enhance student's social capital. Much more research is needed about how Latina/os acquire social, civic, and other forms of capital in college (Núñez, Hoover, Pickett, Stuart-Carruthers, and Vázquez, 2013).

Colleges and universities boast a wide array of student organizations that provide both an outlet for engagement and network for students, including special interest organizations, such as

ethnic and racial student organizations. Much of the support for these organizations and activities are generated from student fees, indicating that both students and the institution invest in these student development and social capital-building activities. Moreover, these same student organizations have been shown to have positive cognitive and affective outcomes amongst minority students (Treviño, 1992). More broadly, extracurricular activities have shown to be associated with higher rates of persistence (Tinto, 1975, Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), strong leadership skills (Schuh & Leverty, 1983, Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), the development of social and interpersonal skills (Berman, 1978), and social and intellectual self-confidence (Astin, 1993, Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005.)

More specifically, ethnic and racial student organizations have only come into growing existence during the last three decades (Parra, Rios, & Gutierrez, 1976; Rooney, 1985; Johnson, 1997). American colleges and universities have seen an increase in student-initiated interest organizations in the last decade as campuses have become more diverse. The emergence of these groups is directly connected to demographic changes in the college-going student population that took place during the 1960's and early to middle 1970's (Frankenberg, Lee, and Orfield, 2003), and proportionate increases in student enrollment since. Historically, these changes can be attributed to the changes brought about by the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960's in the United States, and the expanded role of the federal government in higher education that led to the creation of the U.S. Department of Education in 1979 (Astin, 1982). Early racial and ethnic minority college student organizations can trace their founding to student movements that occurred across the country supporting the larger Civil Rights Movement in the United States, in which "minorities were struggling for [their] identity within society" as well as for "identity, recognition, and integration into the majority community" within higher education (Chavez,

1982, p. 15). Accordingly, in part supported by student organizations, this mirrored an increase in access for underrepresented minority students to higher education, and the emergence of ethnic and racial student organizations (Barnes, 1972; Fleming, 1984).

It has been documented that ethnic student organizations enhance college experiences by allowing students to ‘retain and nurture a sense of ethnic identity’ while on college campuses (Padilla, Treviño, Gonzalez, and Treviño, 1997.) Although these student organizations have varied purposes, interests, objectives, and memberships, research has shown that they continue to be concerned with the recruitment and retention of minority students (Fleming, 1984; Trevino, 1992; Montelongo, 2003), promote cultural awareness and understanding (Le Counte, 1987), and serve as a base of support for their members. Further, these same organizations facilitate overall college transition (Fuentes Cothran, & Sedlacek, 1991; Moran, Yengo, & Algier, 1994) and enhance levels of peer support (Bennett, 1999; Persen & Christensen, 1996). Moreover, Treviño (1992) noted, these groups also serve as advocates for meeting the needs of their membership and communities with the events they organize, sponsor, and host—and the support they provide one another. This said, it would not be too far to hypothesize that these same organizations may affect other student outcomes, as well as facilitate the development of critical social and civic skills. This study examines key outcomes of participating in racial and ethnic student organizations and other activities amongst Latina/o college students. Information on these outcomes, obtained through an empirical analysis, provides critical data to stakeholders on how they can support and enhance opportunities for Latina/o college students that can augment their college experiences and civic development.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Researchers, institutional leaders, government policy makers, and other stakeholders realize the significant role an educated Hispanic population will play in our nation and future workforce (Kelly, Schneider, and Carey, 2010; Santiago and Solis, 2012; Gándara, 2009; Tienda and Mitchell 2006). As the youngest and one of the fastest growing minority groups in the country (second to the growing Asian population in the United States), and with the multiple purposes of American higher education, the federal government and others are rightly concerned about how changing demographic shifts are still not reflected among those accessing and completing degrees (White House, 2011). Leading foundations such as the Lumina Foundation, the nation's largest private foundation committed solely to enrolling and graduating more students from college, highlight that the profile of today's college-going population has changed, and it looks much different than it did decades ago. They point out that students today are older, more experienced in work, and more socioeconomically and racially diverse than their peers of decades past. Institutions need to continue to evolve to meet the growing student needs of a more diverse student body.

At the same time, data suggests that the education gap in attainment rates for Latina/o students has widened (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). From 1995 to 2015, the percentage of 25- to 29-year-olds who had attained a bachelor's or higher degree increased for those who were White (from 29 to 43 percent), Black (from 15 to 21 percent), Hispanic (from 9 to 16 percent), and Asian/Pacific Islander (from 43 to 63 percent); however, the gap between White and Hispanic 25- to 29-year-olds at this level widened from 20 to 27 percentage points (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Research has shown student engagement central to under-represented and non-traditional students' completion (Nora, Barlow, and Crisp,

2005), including Latina/o college students. Making all of this more of an imperative, the last U.S. Census (2010) show Hispanics accounted for more than half the nation's population growth between 2000 and 2010, bringing the number of Hispanics to more than 50 million, or 16 percent of the US population. This figure is expected to continue to grow, with population projections showing Hispanics to reach over 30 percent of the US population by 2050 (Colby, S.L. and Ortman, J.M., 2015). The disparity between educational attainment rates, those participating and completing higher education, and the growing U.S. Hispanic population that should be more equitably reflected in leadership across sectors at all levels, is the impetus for this study. More specifically, the development and empowerment of Latina/os will come from educational attainment and civic awareness and engagement, which can be facilitated by higher education institutions.

To this end, decades of research have shown that Latina/o and other minority students experience campus climates and college differently than their white counterparts, often leading to problems that can affect student development and retention, attrition, and completion (Gross, 2011; Torres, 2006; Hernandez and Lopez 2004; Hernandez, 2000; Hall, 1999). While there is a growing body of postsecondary literature on underrepresented minority (URM) students and their collegiate experiences, campus climate, persistence, and the need to increase college graduation rates, not enough is understood of ethnic and racial student organizations and the greater role they play in facilitating college student experiences—and more specifically, the outcomes of said participation amongst Latino college students.

With the demographic transformation the country is undergoing, it is clear that Hispanics must take on increasing leadership roles—and be prepared to do so; thus, the question arises regarding whether the college experience is playing a role in Latina/o leadership ability. At a

time when the literature on Latina/os in higher education continues to be a growing area of scholarship, the topic of student organizations has not been an area that has been widely examined. However, more focused strands of research critically examine different roles that college student organizations in general play as they relate to campus climates, diverse peer-groups, retention, and student development (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin, 2002; Antonio, 1998; Hurtado, Dey, Treviño, 1994; Cooper, Healy, and Simpson, 1994.)

As student populations across the United States continue to grow and institutions become more diverse, we expect to see more research aimed to understand how different college environments affect and mediate the college experience for more diverse student populations. More specifically, researchers have examined the impact of participation in ethnic student organizations and the resulting effects on leadership, satisfaction with college, and feelings of belonging to the campus community, as they investigated the mediating effect that such organizations can play in hostile climates, such as those at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI's) (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Montelongo, 2003.) This representation, or lack of a critical mass, within a college can create an uncomfortable campus climate for many students of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, and can affect an individual's college experience and student outcomes.

Research has proven that Latina/o students, as an aggregate, also interpret the climate of predominantly White colleges and universities as alienating, isolating, hostile and unsupportive (Gonzalez, 2000; Gándara, 1995; Hurtado, 1992, 1994; Hurtado, Carter, and Spuler, 1996.) For example, Hurtado (1994) found that even high-achieving Latina/o students attending predominantly White universities viewed the climate of these institutions as troublesome. In particular, she discovered that more than a quarter of these high-achieving Latino students felt as

though they did not fit-in. This alienation can certainly manifest itself and affect their academic and social experiences. In fact, many of these same students experience social, cultural, and academic difficulties when they arrive on PWI's, leading to troubling attrition (Delgado-Romero and Hernandez, 2002.) Given the potential for positive outcomes of ethnic and racial student organizations, the present study explored the characteristics of Latina/o students who participate in these type of student organizations, and how participation in ethnic and racial student organizations affects important social and civic learning outcomes at American colleges and universities.

Regarding the concern on civic and democratic engagement by AAC&U, and more specifically the focus on the nation preparing its students towards sustaining and developing shared democratic principles and engaging a more pluralistic democracy, this study considered the extent to which particular student experiences and student involvement in ethnic and racial student organizations affect a student's self-reported civic awareness, commitment to becoming a community leader, and leadership development among Latina/os. This study revisits leadership development with a new generation of students. It has been almost 25 years since the last major multi-institutional study of student participation in these organizations (Treviño, 1992), and much has changed in those decades as American college and universities have become more diverse.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to revisit, expand, and test new outcomes related to Latina/o student participation in ethnic and racial student organizations to better understand Latina/o experiences and how higher education develops the skills for participation in American democracy. Whereas the area of leadership development has already been examined (Montelongo, 2003; Astin, 1999;



Treviño, 1992; Astin, 1993; Hillison 1984), this study revisited this outcome with a new generation of Latina/o college students. In addition, this study also examined the relationship between participation in such organizations on civic awareness, commitment to the goal of becoming a community leader, and changes in reported leadership ability during college. Given the limited quantitative research on ethnic and racial student organizations, this study drew on national survey information reported from students attending four-year colleges and universities across the United States.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the study in exploring the concept of ethnic/racial student organizations as a (re)source for leadership and civic capital for Latino's as they navigate through college, and more specifically outcomes of such participation:

1. What are the characteristics of Latina/o college students who participate in ethnic/racial student organizations?
2. After controlling for background characteristics, predispositions, and college environments, what is the effect, if any, of institutional factors, college experiences and activities, including participating in racial/ethnic student organizations, amongst Latino college students on (1) civic awareness; (2) change in commitment of becoming a community leader, and (3) changes in self-reported leadership ability?

### **Scope of the Study**

The dataset utilized for this study was originally collected from student responses on surveys conducted by Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP): the 2004 Freshman Survey (TFS) and 2008 College Senior Survey (CSS). The two-time point (2004/2008) longitudinal dataset was particularly appropriate for examining and controlling predispositions,

background characteristics, college environments and experiences. The study sample included Latina/o college students who completed the surveys at participating American colleges and universities nationwide.

The study focused on the experiences of Latina/os who entered colleges in 2004 and responded to The Freshman Survey (TFS) and the 2008 College Senior Survey (CSS), four years later, and is limited to students who in 2004 were first-time, full-time entering freshmen at four-year colleges and universities. Although, it has been documented that the majority of Latinos are over represented at community colleges (Alfonso, 2004; Llagas & Snyder, 2003; Stearns & Watanabe, 2002), those institutions vary in their purpose and mission; further, students at community colleges are unique from their counterparts at four-year colleges and universities (i.e. more likely to enroll part-time, to commute, not enroll on a continuous basis, and not always seek to complete a degree, etc;) and have distinct – and varying - college experiences. This being said, sampling from a dataset of first-time, full-time entering freshmen who indicated an intent of at least a B.A. or higher who persisted to their fourth year allowed for examining student change on outcomes with longitudinal data that contains important controls (background, early college experiences, and predispositions).

Adding to the limited understanding of Latina/o student experiences, this study lends generalizability through quantitative analysis by testing the findings of a number of qualitative studies. The sample included 2,164 Latina/os attending 259 colleges and universities that vary by selectivity, size, and location of the country. This represents one of the largest longitudinal samples of Latina/o college students who have remained at the same college they entered as freshmen—indicating this is a prime population for understanding the potential impact of experiences at the colleges they elected to attend in 2004. The large sample is a result of

supplemental funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF), which was part of a larger project on underrepresented groups that included science and non-science freshmen aspirants. Special permission to use the sample was obtained from the project principal investigator, Sylvia Hurtado. NIH in particular allowed targeted of specific campuses that enrolled large numbers of Hispanic students, or Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs).

### **Contributions of the Study**

Given the continuous growth of the Hispanic population in the United States, and projected growth in their participation in the polity in the coming decades, it is important to better understand the effects that particular college environments and activities have on Latina/o student development and outcomes. The cohort of Latina/o college students in this study have now graduated, are eligible to participate in the electoral process, and are into their early careers or graduate schools. This study followed them during “four critical years” to understand changes among Latina/os that they may demonstrate today in their leadership and civic participation.

In many respects, more than just the U.S. economy and future workforce will be largely dependent on the growing Latina/o segment of the population, some argue the long-term future of the nation’s democracy is dependent on the quality of education they receive (AAC&U, 2012). Understanding that the collegiate years in large part shape, influence, and develop an individual’s attitudes, values, and beliefs, perhaps the most significant contribution of this study is on how Latina/o students’ develop civic awareness. That is measured as an understanding of issues affecting their local communities, national and world issues. In the present era of fake news and alternative facts, and when thought leaders and others continue to question the benefits of American higher education for the public good (Baum and McPherson, 2011; Chambers and

Gopaul, 2008; Harper, Patton, Wooden, 2009; Duderstadt, 2008), this study examined college experience effects on a vibrant, young, diverse growing Latina/o population.

In terms of research, there are significant gaps in the literature regarding the effect of racial and ethnic student organizations and Latina/os who participate in them. Some literature has identified them as “safe spaces” for students (Guiffrida, 2003; Montelongo, 2003; Delgado-Romero and Hernandez, 2002; Astin, Treviño, & Wingard, 1991), but there is relatively little quantitative research that indicates the potential benefits (Trevino, 1992). Moreover, the lack of theory (other than integration or involvement principles) does not differentiate the effects of types of involvement with outcomes for Latina/os in particular. This indicates a one size fits all approach to theory and research that informs campus practice, without recognizing the value of the organizations with culturally relevant foci. In addition, the notions of social and civic capital are key developments for the field in application to Latina/o college students (Núñez, 2009; Cuellar, 2012; Arellano, 2011). In terms of actual benefits to these organizations, the study will also inform current practice in terms of funding for student organizations, possibly moving them from the margin to the center in terms of their benefits and contributions as the number of Latina/os increase on American college and university campus.

With U.S colleges and universities becoming more diverse in the past two decades, this study contributes to the existing body of literature by considering diversity and civic-oriented activities and college environments, both positive cross-racial interactions and negative cross-racial interactions and their effects specifically on Latina/o student leadership and civic outcomes. Furthermore, with a growing interest on Hispanic-Serving Institutions, the study also considered the experiences of Latina/o students at these institutions compared with students at Emerging HSIs and Predominantly White Institutions.

## **Study Outline**

This study explored key outcomes associated with Latino college student participation in ethnic and racial student organizations. To better understand the relationship between independent variables in the study and the three key outcomes being examined, this study included a thorough review of the literature, outline of research methodology, summary of results, and concludes with a discussion of findings as well as the implication and directions for future research. Chapter Two is outlined in eight sections: (i) theoretical and conceptual frameworks, (ii) literature on student organizations and participation in extracurricular activities, (iii) a discussion on emergence of ethnic and racial student organizations on American colleges and universities, followed by (iv) review of literature on ethnic and racial student organizations and (v) habitus, as well as (vi) individual student background characteristics associated with participation in college student organizations and involvement and (vii) environmental characteristics related to involvement, and (viii) experiences and outcomes associated with participation in college student organization and involvement accordingly that determined variable selection. Moreover, a section linking social and civic outcomes to participation ethnic/racial student organizations is discussed. Chapter Three illustrates the research design and method, elaborates on the sample, variables in study, and analysis. Chapter Four presents results of the study, and summarizes findings, and Chapter Five provides a discussion of implications for research with recommendations for campuses, policymakers and stakeholders.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars have identified a number of factors that may contribute to engagement of undergraduates in four-year colleges and universities in general (Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2005; Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993; Astin, 1984, 1993; Spady, 1970). Perhaps the most cited theories of student engagement in higher education is Tinto's Theory of Student Integration (1975) and his subsequent Theory on Student Departure (1987, 1993). Tinto's theories initially stood the test of time, and to date remains amongst the most comprehensive—and cited—theoretical frameworks that have guided institutional programs, as well as involvement, engagement, and retention studies. In simplified terms, the models accounted for student's pre-entry attributes; intentions, goals, and commitments; both academic and social experiences which lead to student integration; and, as a result of these experiences students would revisit their intentions, goals, and commitments; leading to departure decision as a graduate. It posited that if a student failed to fully engage in the academic or social experiences it could well compromise their full integration and lead to an early departure from the institution. However, Tinto's models would come to be critiqued for its applicability to more diverse students, and growing racial and ethnic student populations on American colleges and universities.

Although Tinto's and other's frameworks were important to understand retention, engagement and persistence in higher education, scholars would argue that they do not reflect the experiences of Latinos or other underrepresented groups (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rendón, 1994; Cabrera & Nora, 1994; Rendón, Jalomo & Nora, 2000; Tierney, 1992). Researchers critiqued Tinto's integration theory for implying that students of color, in order to succeed, had to conform to universities' institutional norms (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Tierney, 1992). Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson (1997) directly critiqued the

applicability of many aspects of Tinto's model to students from more diverse backgrounds.

Taken the shortcomings and critiques in the field, Tinto revised his theory over time (1975, 1987, 1993), incorporating many of the criticisms and the work of others who modified his framework (Cabrera, Castafieda, Nora, and Hengstler 1992) leading up to its third and final revision in 1993.

Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson's (1997) review of the literature suggested Tinto's model does not acknowledge more diverse environments and did not adequately address the racial-ethnic dimension of "integrating experiences" for minority students – a central focus of this study. Hurtado (1994) noted that scholars have used constructs that often reflect participation in mainstream activities in colleges without considering whether the social distance between racial and ethnic groups may inhibit participation in these activities. In another study, Hurtado and Carter (1997) stated that “forms of affiliation that may reflect specific interests of Latino students, such as participation in ethnic student organizations have been excluded from measures of social integration that include college activities” further noting that participation in mainstream organizations may not promote the kinds of support that Latino students need (p. 327).

More recently, student engagement studies have expanded their focus to examine other outcomes. Núñez (2009) noted that engagement theories overlook how social capital, including affiliations with families and communities outside of college, can impact college outcomes (Nora, 2001/2). She stated that scholars most often cite the sense of belonging construct (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Hurtado & Carter, 1997) as a promising alternative concept for understanding how students of color may develop a sense of membership in the university (Braxton, 2000). As such, participation in ethnic and racial student organizations is central to the present analysis.

Given the limitations of Tinto's theoretical framework for more diverse and non-traditional students, two models that better guided the present study are: Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1984, 1999) and Nora, Barlow, and Crisp's (2005) Student/Institution Engagement Theoretical Framework. Taken together, Astin's (1984, 1999) work is considered race-neutral (or devoid of race) in centering engagement—or involvement—with a student's time at the center, whereas Nora et al., have provided a reformulation of the Tinto's model (1993) that is widely considered more inclusive and applicable toward more diverse student populations, including factors that may influence minority, low-income, and non-traditional students based on the empirical research focused on these student communities.

Moving forward, the review of the literature in this section will elaborate on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guided this study. Immediately after that discussion, a review of literature on student organizations is discussed, leading to a more limited synthesis on research on ethnic/racial student organization as it relates to the experiences of college students. Given the historical context and emergence of ethnic and racial student organization, the study's outcomes— leadership development, and expanding our understanding of how American higher education promotes democratic principles including civic awareness and commitment of becoming a community leader—are discussed as social and civic outcomes that could be linked to ethnic and racial student organizations. Furthermore, the literature on individual background and environmental characteristics related to student involvement in student organizations, as well as participation in college extra-curricular activities set the foundation for this examination of involvement and engagement. Because the literature on ethnic and racial student organizations and the focus of this study on Latino college students, this



chapter will also review experiences related to participation in Latino college student organizations, and conclude with a discussion linking social outcomes and civic capital.

## **Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

### **Astin's Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education**

After decades of research, Alexander Astin, arguably the most cited scholar in the study of higher education, presented a Theory of Student Involvement (1984, 1999) as an alternative to more complex frameworks of student engagement. Astin stated that his student involvement theory could, “explain most of the empirical knowledge about environmental influences on student development that researchers have gained over the years” (p. 518). Contrast to other frameworks, Astin's Theory of Student Involvement is recognized for its applicability to all students. Basic in many forms, this theory continues to be lauded and used by many college administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals today.

The basic element of the Astin's theory is the idea of *involvement*, referring to the amount of both physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the college experience (Astin, 1999). Of his theory, Astin argued that “a highly-involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students” (p. 518). It is both, this depth and breadth, of time and energy a student commits to his or her activities that translates to engagement and their development. As Astin would put it, “[i]t is not so much what the individual thinks or feels, but what the individual does, how he or she behaves, that defines and identifies involvement” (p. 519). Here, it is important to consider and juxtapose this theory for lack of attention, focus, or consideration of minority populations and their unique experiences which could hinder *involvement* as Astin conceptualized [e.g. research

that shows that Latino college students are more likely to live off-campus (Kuh, Gonyea, and Palmer, 2001) and research that shows they still have a sense of belonging to campus when living at home (Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008)], as well as many of the same concerns considered in the critiques of Tinto's theories. Although, I maintain that Astin's theory is race-neutral with a focus of time and physical and psychological energy exerted, I contend it was devoid of racial consideration.

For its applicability of involvement as both the physical and psychological energy students' commit—central to the Theory of Student Involvement, Astin (1984) put forward five basic assumptions that guided this understanding of involvement, engagement, and development:

1. Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy,
2. Involvement occurs on a continuum,
3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features,
4. The amount of student learning and personal development is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program,
5. Effectiveness is directly related to the capacity of policy or practice to increase student involvement.

With these key principles, the theory emphasized active participation versus motivation, making it more susceptible to direct observation and measurement. In contrasting his theory to other developmental theories, Astin's theory of student involvement is more concerned with the behavioral mechanisms or processes that facilitate the student's development—as he would put it, “the *how* of student development” (p. 522). Further, it also placed the students time as the most significant institutional resource, meaning that the “extent to which students can achieve

particular developmental goals is a direct function of the time and effort they devote to activities designed to produce gains” (p. 522).

As stated from the onset, the theory of student involvement came from decades of research on students in college and a longitudinal study on college students who did not complete and would dropout (Astin, 1975). Astin’s own research would come to identify factors in the college environment that significantly affect student engagement in college.

Astin’s study of dropouts (1975) also yielded significant findings in regards to student’s “fit” between themselves and college. There are parallels to this present study and the “how” students develop and succeed, are more involved, engaged, and develop in environments that they deem supportive and more of a “fit” (e.g. Latinos in ethnic and racial student organizations). He presented findings on students with different backgrounds including religious students, black students, and students from small towns who were shown to be more likely to persist at religious institutions of their same religious background, that black students were more likely to persist at historically black colleges and universities, and students from small towns would be more likely to persist in small colleges versus larger institutions, respectively. Controlling for these background characteristics, Astin argued the origin of such effects lies in the student’s ability to *identify* with the institution. Because ethnic and racial student organizations have been shown to help students identify and “fit” on college campuses, it is opportune to consider outcomes amongst a representative sample of Latino college student and their reported participation in ethnic and racial student organizations. As Astin would state, “[it] is easier to become involved when one can identify with the college environment” (p. 524). From this, I posit a parallel amongst racial and ethnic minorities, and that idea of positive outcomes associated from having access to and student’s involvement in ethnic/racial student organizations. However, the impetus

and driving force for their involvement in student organizations may be that they do not identify with the institution but share a commitment to actually want to change it.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) stated that even the earliest work on retention (Spady, 1970) identified how students choose particular affiliation activities (e.g. may join student organizations) because they are otherwise alienated in the environment. In fact, some students become involved to change the institution, understanding that they do not fit in but that the institution has an obligation to engage and educate them. Moreover, the present study contends that how students *feel* motivates their behavior. The question that arises is whether students choose to form and join racial and ethnic student organizations as a form a resistance to predominant cultural norms and activities, which available data cannot capture or measure.

Furthermore, Astin tested his own theory and investigated the involvement phenomenon, examining the impact of college on 80 different student outcomes (Astin, 1977). He noted, that conceivably the most important general conclusion reached from his elaborate findings was that “all forms of student involvement are associated with greater than average changes in entering freshmen characteristics” (p. 524). This confirms the profound and significant impact that college and the college experience can have on students. As such, this study examined how colleges, college environments, and college experiences impact important leadership and civic outcomes amongst Latina/o college students. In fact, Astin noted that for particular outcomes, involvement was more strongly associated with change than both entering freshmen and institutional characteristics (Astin, 1999). More specifically, he found that resident students were more likely than commuters to achieve in such extracurricular areas as leadership, express satisfaction with their undergraduate experience—particularly in the area of student friendships, and social life. Similarly, and building on these findings, the present study examined the effects

of participating in ethnic and racial student organizations on three particular outcomes amongst Latino college students: civic awareness, change in reported importance of becoming a community leader, and self-reported leadership ability.

In using Astin's (1984, 1999) Theory of Student Involvement, this study assumed that Latino college student's involvement in ethnic and racial student organizations has qualities that affect current and future outcomes. As stated in Astin's theory, student involvement occurs on a continuum where students manifest different degrees of involvement in a given activity—and different degrees of involvement in different activities. Montenegro (2003) stated that it is this continuous nature of involvement and the extent to which students are involved in an activity that can directly influence students learning and personal development. This study looked at one particular form of involvement and its potential outcomes given degree of participation and engagement.

### **Nora, Barlow, and Crisp's Student/Institution Engagement Theoretical Framework**

Given the shortcomings and critiques with models on student engagement and persistence discussed at the start of this chapter, especially when they come to more diverse students, finding frameworks to guide this present study was limiting. One of the more comprehensive models of student engagement available for researchers today is Nora, Barlow, and Crisp's Student/Institution Engagement Theoretical Framework (2005). This framework sought to build off Tinto's Theory of Student Departure, and make it more inclusive of factors that impact the experience of more diverse students. In their reformation of earlier integration models on institution engagement, they sought to include recent developments in retention research that more appropriately includes factors of influence on the experiences of underrepresented, minority, and non-traditional students. In this piece, which has more recently become the

guiding framework for studies on diverse student populations, Nora et al, have placed important variables that previous research has shown to influence minority and other non-traditional student's experiences. Incorporating earlier research findings, their model includes factors such as pre-college psycho-social elements, financial factors, environmental push and pull factors (family support as well as family and work responsibilities), amongst other variables.

Broadly, Nora et al. Student/Institution Engagement Model Theoretical Framework (2005) considers six different overarching constructs within their model including: pre-college factors & pull factors, initial commitments, academic and social experiences, cognitive & non-cognitive outcomes, leading to student's final commitment, and persistence. Their model considered findings compiled in the literature on student persistence past the first year, as well as considering the "different, yet overlapping, frameworks" (p.130). Their extensive review of the engagement and persistence literature of the past thirty years, led to the conceptualization of Nora's Student Engagement Model (2004), a precursor to Nora et al, (2005) Student/Institutional Engagement Model Theoretical Framework. Central to their theory is the idea of *engagement*, including social experiences and student involvement in student organizations, or social engagement as an integral form of participation in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Nora, 1987; Astin, 1984; Mallette & Cabrera, 1991; Tinto, 1993). For all the previous, this framework was chosen to further guide this study.

Guided by their extensive review of the literature in their model, their framework structured the present analysis. Following the temporal sequence of Nora et al. theoretical framework, the present study examined pre-college factors and pull factor to determine the characteristics of the students in the sample that opt to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations. Further, focusing on the social experience construct of the model, this study

focused on self-reported involvement in ethnic and racial student organizations amongst Latino college students and determine the non-cognitive outcomes proposed: civic awareness, commitment of becoming a community leader, and leadership development. Additionally, students participation in ethnic and racial student organizations was considered within the concept of *habitus*, defined as class and race-based set of subjective perceptions that people use to form sensible aspirations (expectations, outlooks, experiences, beliefs, attitudes, aspirations) (Hovrat, 1997; McDonough, Antonio, and Trent, 1997). I position this at the center, and argue exists within ethnic and racial student organizations. This idea contrast with Astin's assumption that it is not what students feel but how they behave.

### **Literature on Student Organizations and Participation in Extracurricular Activities**

Although, literature on student organizations historically has not focused on racial and ethnic minority students, it is important to understand the role such groups have played on college and university campuses. Student organizations have become institutions in their own right, playing a role not only in the lives of their student membership, but also the larger campus identity and culture, and the campus climate. Previous research has indicated that student involvement in extra-curricular activities by college and university students is related to specific educational outcomes, including higher rates of persistence (Tinto, 1975; Astin, 1984, Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2005), and develop social and interpersonal skills (Astin, 1977, Berman, 1978), amongst other outcomes. For this reason, it is important to have an understanding of these groups, before focusing on the impact of ethnic and racial student organizations that are central to this study.

Astin (1993) noted that participation in extracurricular activities and student organizations can be associated with several factors including individual characteristics and

larger campus environments. Williams and Winston, Jr (1985) found that when students were compared to their counterparts who were not members of college student organizations, members better understood their abilities and began to explore their interest and values more, and were more aware of resources and learning opportunities available to reach these goals. Some could argue that this can be another peer-group effect, of being able to turn to other students for advice or even mentorship within this student group relationships and extended networks. In another widely-cited study of students who participated in student organizations and their peers that did not, Abrahamowicz (1988) found that those who did participate, were more involved in a variety of academic and non-academic activities, and demonstrated higher levels of satisfaction with college. His findings also supported others who also found positive interpersonal relationships with other students as well as faculty and administration.

Research on student organizations has shown that these groups are associated with a number of educational outcomes and can play a significant role in the experiences of students who participate (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Astin, 1993; Treviño, 1992; Strifflino & Saunders, 1989). These outcomes have been documented as both positive and negative net-effects on outcomes. For example, in their comprehensive synthesis of research effectively titled, "How College Effects Students," (2005) Ernest T. Pascarella and Patrick T. Terenzini summarized the effects of social and extracurricular involvements on cognitive skills and intellectual growth, persistence and educational attainment, as well as moral development change. In contrast, participation in particular types of student organizations (e.g. fraternities and sororities) or other activities have been shown to have an adverse effect such as academic dishonesty and cheating, binge drinking, etc. (Astin, 1993).



Earlier studies on student groups have found that participation in student organizations positively affect development of leadership (Treviño, 1992; Astin, 1993; Hillison 1984), an important critical competency and skill in today's global competitive world. Moreover, student involvement, positive interpersonal relationship, and satisfaction are also outcomes shown as a result of participating in student organizations (Trevino, 1992). Montelongo (2003) further noted that participation in student organizations also improved "interpersonal and leadership skills, allowing students to develop their goals and identify steps to achieve these goals" (p. 25), their self-concept, and goal-setting.

Such findings on college student organizations are not surprising given the many empirical studies suggesting a "student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years" Astin (1993, p. 398). (Also see Pascarella and Terrenzini, 2005; Astin, 1997; Bowen, 1977; Chickering, 1978.) In his extensive study, Astin (1993) further found cognitive development, critical thinking, decision-making, as well as personal or affective development of attitudes, values, aspirations and personality disposition were other outcomes associated with participation in student organizations – all important skills and competencies in an increasing competitive economy. The present study expands these findings and determine if and how leadership and civic outcomes are associated with participation in student organizations. The previous discussion has highlighted outcomes of participating in student organizations, in part to peer-group influence, but further driven by the focus, mission, and purpose of each group or organization.

It is important to note that many of the studies referenced in this section may be limited to their application to Latina/o and other minority student populations. Many looked at college students as an aggregate and did not provide a breakdown of students. In fact, most expressed

the limitation of generalizing to underrepresented groups since mostly white college student leaders and traditionally predominantly white college student organizations were profiled and sampled (e.g. Kuh, 1995; Cooper Healey, and Simpson, 1994). Given the growth of the Latina/o student population, it is worth reconsidering some of the key assumptions in previous studies and focus on more culturally-relevant types of involvement and engagement in college.

Although it is understood that participation in college student organizations has been shown to have an influence on affective outcomes and increasing participation and involvement within campus and the community (Schuh and Laverty, 1983; William & Winston, Jr. 1985), it is important to consider how participation in ethnic/racial student organizations effect Latina/o college outcomes. Stage and Anaya (1996) state that research findings on student experiences with college student organizations were frequently generalized to those of all college students. They further noted research samples were comprised of mostly middle class white students who provided the “norms” for these experiences where “diverse persons and diverse experiences often appear other than normal” (p. 49), or in the margins. Researchers have failed to consider the contributions that minority college student organizations present on many campuses. Since these studies, college environments have become more diverse and more dynamic, and provide new opportunities and environments to examine the student experience, including, ethnic and racial student organizations which Johnson (1997) described as relatively recent opportunities in the longer history of American higher education for student involvement on college campuses. Ethnic/racial student organizations have a unique purpose, in part due to their history and emergence on American colleges and universities. This will further be discussed, as well as the characteristics of participation in student organizations in next sections of this chapter.

## **Emergence of Ethnic/Racial Student Organizations on American Colleges and Universities**

The emergence of minority, ethnic, and racial student organizations on American colleges and universities reflect the changing demographics of college student populations in the United States. As Treviño (1992) noted at the time, one type of student organization that emerged on college and university campuses in the last four decades are ethnic and racial student organization (Rooney, 1985). Historically, the emergence of these groups came as a result of broader access that was largely due civil rights movements in the United States in the 1960's and mandates for affirmative recourse at the federal level to dismantle barriers to full participation for targeted groups. As Astin (1982) noted, it was the turmoil on college campuses and communities across the country associated with the civil rights movement and the expanded federal role in education, that gave more access to larger number of minority students to higher education opportunities.

This access did not come easy. Once students began to enroll at predominantly White colleges and universities, the environments they encountered proved to be unsupportive, and even hostile for ethnic and racial minority students; this in turn, highlighted the need for and creation for student support services. Simply put, colleges and universities did not have the programs or structured opportunities for a new generation of students (e.g. first-generation, low-income, non-traditional, and more diverse students). In short, they could not support more diverse student bodies and their development, so students began to form ethnic/racial organizations to support one another. This in turn, highlighted the need for students to become more actively engaged, even in unsupportive environments that lacked curriculum, faculty, or even cultural centers initially. This is still part of the challenge for many institutions today.

With time, and for institutional support, this influx of minority students sought to create ethnic/racial and student interest organizations on college campuses (Treviño, 1992; Barnes, 1972; Fleming, 1984). In his review of ethnic/racial student organizations, Trevino (1992) noted that “these groups have varied objectives and engage in numerous activities, [however] most can be characterized as student organizations concerned with the recruitment and retention of minority students (Fleming, 1984), promote cultural awareness and understanding (LeCounte, 1987), and serve as a base of support for their members (Astin, Treviño, & Wingard, 1991; Chew & Ogi, 1987). Given the historical context and how these ethnic/racial student organizations emerged on American colleges and universities, it is not surprising that they are characterized by such activities. Now decades later, these same student organizations still prioritize many of these same activities; however, they have grown in numbers and interest, and have evolved to embrace and showcase cultural traditions on college campuses and the community. The next section will present literature on these specific student organizations—adding to more supportive campus climates for underrepresented students, and more inclusive and supportive college and university environments.

### **Literature on Ethnic/Racial Student Organizations**

At a time when the literature on Latinos in higher education continues to be a growing area of scholarship, the topic of ethnic and racial student organizations has not been an area that has been widely or more critically examined. The vast majority of studies in this limited literature are qualitative studies, which are in part due to the lack of available data collected on larger institutional or national samples and surveys. Furthermore, given the highly-contextualized nature of these organizations in these college environments, it is likely that the number of students who participate may have been small on particular campuses. Finally, it is

also driven by the scholars in this area and their training and preferred method of inquiry in order to tell students' stories. This understanding is critical for the vitality of higher education institutions that will compete for more diverse and competitive students.

More broadly speaking, researchers have discussed the impact of participation in ethnic student organizations amongst Latinos and the resulting effects on leadership, satisfaction with college, and feelings of belonging to the campus community, as they investigated the mediating effect that such organizations can play in oppressive climates, such as those at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI's) (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Montelongo, 2003.)

In examining the role of student involvement and engagement in retention and persistence models, students—especially Latino college students—often seek out different types of student organizations in an attempt to get involved, which also serves as a tool for student engagement, development, personal empowerment, opportunities for alliance building (support-network) with other members of their communities, and most importantly serves as an important source of interpersonal interactions and social capital where they obtain access to resources through peer networks. Delgado-Romero and Hernandez's study (2002) illustrated how ethnic and cultural groups provide students with similar racial and/or ethnic heritages with the opportunity to share common interest, and provide support from peers that enable students of color to persist, develop, and succeed in college.

According to Dunkel and Schus (1998) student groups not only provide a supportive social outlet, they also provide opportunities for networking, building leadership skills, and the development of practical competence. This study builds on these findings and also examined a relationship between participation in these student groups and civic awareness as well as importance of becoming a community leader. Similarly, in a qualitative study, Guiffrida (2003)

found many of the same findings including professional connections, giving back, comfort and support to members of their respective ethnic communities. Furthermore, Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel's (1991) qualitative study of Hispanic and Native American students found that participation in ethnic organizations enables students of color to scale down the larger campus environment by forming smaller "enclaves" (p. 436.) Similarly, Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, and Treviño (1997) using data collected in small focus groups with Hispanic, Asian American, Native American, and African American students, found that ethnic organizations enhanced their college experiences by allowing them to "retain and nurture a sense of ethnic identity on campus" (p. 134.) They concluded that an important benefit of involvement in ethnic and student organizations is to assist students of color in bridging the cultural gap between their home communities and PWI's—and provide a space for them to nurture and grow; but, how does this experience affect other key outcomes that will be important to our society and the US, including Latina/o leadership development and civic awareness?

Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel (1991), argued that once integrated into an ethnic enclave, students felt more comfortable exploring and integrating into the larger campus community. These studies are valuable in identifying cultural student organizations as important to the social integration and engagement of students of color at PWIs. However, there is much that remains unknown regarding the conditions under which this involvement facilitates particular outcomes. It is important to understand and remember that the experiences of students in ethnic/racial student organizations do not always parallel those of traditional student organizations. In fact, these organizations are quite dynamic and constantly changing with each new member and cohort of students, as well as evolving issues they seek to address that affect their communities on-and-off-campus. Still, I argue that a larger interaction phenomenon occurs amongst the

students who make up these organizations, which are based on internalized attitudes, beliefs and aspirations (*habitus*) – that must be acknowledged and considered as a lense for this analysis.

### **Habitus**

Acknowledging the role of student organizations on college campuses and the effects of ethnic and student organizations on students, I further consider a *habitus-effect* as a central phenomenon that co-exists amongst students within these organization. Although it is seen more within the college access literature, *habitus* is characterized as a class and race-based set of subjective perceptions (Hovrat, 1996; McDonough, Antonio, and Trent, 1997) - a mindset - that people use to form “sensible” aspirations. Given that one of the outcomes being examined is the commitment and importance of becoming a community leader, it was important to consider around reported participation in ethnic and racial student organizations. For many students, their social networks and the groups they become involved with become a proxy for *familial* support within their networks while at school. In fact, McDonough (1997) noted that family expectations are instrumental in influencing *habiti*.

*Habitus* is a deeply internalized system of outlooks, experiences, and beliefs that an individual gets from their immediate environment (Bourdieu, 1977.) Given the previous literature on ethnic/student organizations and how they provide enclaves and supportive environments for minority students, it makes sense to consider participating in ethnic/racial student organizations may be where these students develop shared values, aspirations and commitments, and even beliefs. For college students, their intimate and dedicated time in ethnic student organizations becomes their immediate environment, and allows the space and conditions where other members become their closest friends, support network, and could yield high peer-group effects on students.

According to McDonough et al., (1997) it is important to remember that it is a common set of subjective perceptions held by members of the same class or racial groups which shapes an individual's expectations, attitudes, and aspirations. Hence, I consider this when examining outcomes associated with participating in racial/ethnic student organizations. In fact, Luke (2010) studied university culture and academic life, and found that academic and intellectual practices are inculcated in the habitus of the community members. Using a Bourdieu's conceptualization of the habitus and incorporation of student culture opens particular aspects of student culture for analysis, including participation in racial and ethnic student organizations. Furthermore, the concept of habitus lends a new way to conceptualize social interactions and take on particular behaviors and understanding of social trajectory through student activities and culture: a "sense of collective and individual social identity, habits of thought, dispositions that are formed in and buy those [activities]" (Luke, 2010, p. 22). Habitus "offers another theoretical framework where sharing a social space can be interpreted as structuring and being structured by particular institutions and culture rather than merely by its inhabitants" (p. 22). In the case of the present study, I considered this habitus-effect within members of ethnic and racial student organizations. While I do not investigate academic and intellectual practices, I suggest that these organizations inculcate other values and aspirations among peers. Thus, the same underlying assumption is applied to examine notions of leadership and civic capital and the primary outcomes being considered in this study.

### **Linking Social and Civic Outcomes to Participation in Ethnic/Racial Student Organizations**

Bowman (2011) stated the success of American democratic society relies heavily on the civic and political engagement of its citizens. A decade earlier, Putnam (2000) argued that in the



decades following the tumultuous and active civil rights movement in the United States, Americans became much less engaged in terms of political participation, involvement in community organizations, and even participation in social activities. Given Putnam's assessment, it is important to recognize the historical emergence of ethnic and racial student organizations on college campuses during this same active period in American history—the disengagement that he characterizes. Ironically, Putnam's observation of less social and civic engagement coincides with what I describe as the infancy of a new generation of racial and ethnic minorities post-civil rights movement (e.g. including the emergence of these groups came as a result of turmoil on college campuses and communities across the country associated with the civil rights movement).

Putnam (2000) underscores the multiple and complex mechanisms through which civic engagement and social connectedness produce results. While he posits that these findings require further confirmation and perhaps qualification, parallels across hundreds of empirical studies in a dozen disparate disciplines and subfields suggest a common framework for understanding these phenomena, a framework that rests on the concept of social capital. He argues that “[b]y analogy with notions of physical capital and human capital--tools and training that enhance individual productivity — ‘social capital’ refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (p. 66). Hence, an interest in examining the outcomes associated with Latina/o participation in ethnic and racial student organizations. Moreover, Putnam elaborated that networks foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust, which I link to the reciprocity amongst members of racial/ethnic student organizations. Such networks facilitate

coordination and communication, amplify reputations, and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved (e.g. habitus).

It is here that I link Putman's assertion of social capital, civic awareness and engagement to the present study. Also informing this study was Núñez's (2009) work on Latino college students' social capital and intercultural capital—the capacity to negotiate diverse racial/ ethnic environments—on Latino students' sense of belonging in college. Her research found that Latino students who are more familiar with diversity issues and who report more social and academic connection and engagement experience a greater sense of belonging even as they also experience a more hostile campus climate. With ethnic and racial student organizations serving as a social organization and networks for Latino college students, the present study examined how participation in these organizations affects social capital outcomes (e.g. Núñez) and civic capital outcomes (e.g. Putnam). Taken together, I examined if by participating in ethnic and racial student organizations, Latino college students have an opportunity to develop their civic awareness (a factor of understanding of the problems facing your community, understanding of national issues, and understanding of global issues), change in commitment to become a community leader, and their self-reported leadership ability. By extension, the study also indicates activities, college environments and institutional factors that are not significant or associated with these outcomes.

Furthermore, Putnam (2000) also argued that researchers across fields including education have discovered that successful outcomes are more likely in civically engaged communities. Although Bowman (2011) found similar trends of less engagement in the last three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century among college students, he also noted that entering first-year college students were much less politically engaged than their predecessors. However, he also

observed that after the tragedy of 9/11, many young Americans in fact have become more civically active, a psychosocial inverse effect of this tragic national event. Teenagers and young adults are now highly involved in a variety of civic activities (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006), and college students have become increasingly engaged in politics and civic engagement (Pryor, Hurtado, DeAngelo, Palucki Blake, & Tran, 2010; Sander & Putnam, 2010). In fact, political engagement among college freshmen hit 40-year high (Pryor, Hurtado, Sharkness, Korn, DeAngelo, Romero, and Tran, 2008). Pryor et al. found that college freshmen are more politically engaged today than at any point during the last 40 years, with an astounding 89.5 percent reporting that they frequently or occasionally discussed politics in the last year.

### **Individual Student Background Characteristics Associated with Participation in College Student Organization and Involvement**

There are many factors that determine a student's ability or desire to become associated with college student organizations. Although it is hard to determine the exact number of students who chose to participate, or quantify characteristics that promote participation, qualitative studies again provide a glimpse into a common set of characteristics shared amongst those students who are involved.

Amongst very limited quantitative studies, demographic or personality characteristics could be used to differentiate and illustrate characteristics amongst participants and non-participants of college extracurricular activities, Burton (1981) surveyed the interpersonal behavior of students amongst different types of student groups. He found that personality characteristics coded as "good personalities, good intelligence, etc," did not significantly influence extracurricular participation. Craig and Warner (1991) found that two general groups of students who were classified as "the serious academically oriented" and the "at-risk" student

were more likely to participate in non-greek and non-governing college student organizations. Their study also revealed that multi-cultural and first-generation college students were more likely to be members of academic, special interest/cultural (ethnic/racial), and service-oriented groups. Moreover, Berk and Goebel (1987) found that it was individual characteristics, not previous school environments that showed to have a stronger influence on extracurricular participation in college—meaning that regardless of their high school environment, students who maintained high levels of participation from high school activities were significantly more likely to also participate in college extracurricular activities.

### **Environmental Characteristics related to Involvement**

Institutional environmental characteristics are another source of influence on college student outcomes. When looking at involvement and student participation more broadly, it can be argued that it is directly related to the structured opportunities that exist and available to students on college campuses. Treviño (1992) stated both environmental factors and college characteristics effect student outcomes from the effects of their background characteristics and are related to student involvement. Other researchers agree that environmental background characteristics must also be considered when examining college student involvement (Astin, 1977; Pascarella ad Terrenzini, 2005). For particular forms of student involvement such as participating in social Greek organizations or student government, institutional selectivity has statistically been shown to influence likelihood of student involvement. Furthermore, Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, Andreas, Lyons, Strange, Krehbiel, and McKay (1991) found that institutional size is also related to student involvement in extracurricular activities. In contrast to Astin’s proposal that larger institutions would have more opportunities for students to get involved, Chickering (1978) found that the size of an institution is inversely related to the opportunities for students to

get involved, finding that at smaller institutions students were twice as likely to get involved. This finding merits additional examination, and this study aims to look at a particular form of student involvement and participation for a particular student population, chiefly participation in ethnic and racial student organizations amongst Latina/o college students, where institutional size is considered as one of the factors that is controlled.

Another environmental characteristic shown to influence student involvement is where a student lives while in college. In this respect, it has been found that students who live on campus or in close proximity adjacent to campus are more likely to be involved and joining student organization compared to students who commute to campus (Astin, 1973; Chikering, 1974).

In a more critical study of institutional characteristics, Hurtado (1990) found that minority student involvement increased on campuses that experienced racially tense climates. Given the history and emergence of racial/ethnic minority student organizations discussed earlier in this chapter, this finding is not surprising. Hurtado argued that as conditions on a campus become racially tense, minority students are more likely to be involved in ethnic/racial minority student organizations. As Treviño (1992) suggested, it is important for college administrators to recognize the diverse ways in which positive educational outcomes can occur for different groups, even emerging out of negative conditions.

Hence, environmental characteristics such as institutional selectivity and size as well, living on campus, and campus climates have been shown to influence student involvement amongst college students. Given the host of individual and environmental characteristics that influence student involvement, it is important to consider the experiences and outcomes related to more specific forms of involvement, including ethnic and racial student organizations, and

how that may differ for more diverse students along with more diverse environments and activities.

### **Experiences and Outcomes related to Participating in Ethnic/Racial Student Organizations**

The study on college student organizations has its roots more broadly on student involvement and extra-curricular activities. Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, and Trevino (1997), documented that ethnic student organizations enhance minority college experiences by allowing [students] to ‘retain and nurture a sense of ethnic identity’ on campus. Furthermore, as Treviño (1992) noted, empirical research on ethnic/racial student organizations is scarce—and from my review of the literature, quantitative research on ethnic/racial student organizations is much more limited. In fact, Trevino was one of the first quantitative studies to use a national sample to examine particular outcomes of participating in ethnic/racial student organizations. His study simply titled, “Participating in Ethnic/Racial Student Organizations,” (1992) looked at the effects of participation on retention and leadership. Twenty years later, my study revisits the characteristics of students who join ethnic/racial student organizations with a new generation of Latino college students. Are there new student background, activities and environmental characteristics of colleges that predict participation in these student groups? At the same time, the study explored if participation in ethnic/racial student organizations has an effect on new student outcomes.

As previously stated, there is a limited string of literature on ethnic/racial student organizations on American colleges and universities. Trevino noted in his study, the vast majority of literature is either historical or qualitative focusing on interviews and focus groups (see Carson, 1981; Exum, 1985; Gomez-Quinones, 1978; Muñoz, Jr., 1989). He further noted

Rooney's (1985) study in detail as one of the few to focus specifically on involvement in minority student organizations.

In his study, Rooney (1985) looked at involvement in ethnic/racial student organizations. As important as his study was to begin to understand their effect, it is important to also note the limitations. First, it is now dated, and college and universities have come a long way in the last three decades. Second, it was also a single institution study, and hard to draw generalizable findings. Still, his study sought to determine the extent to which minority students were involved in both minority and non-minority student organizations. Further, it aimed to also get at the perception of students on minority student organizations. His findings were surprising and not one to expect—then or now. He found that despite 70 percent of minority students being aware of ethnic/racial student organizations, only seventeen percent of the minority students indicated participation in ethnic/racial student organizations. Surprisingly, a much higher number, 98 percent of the minority students he surveyed were involved in non-minority organizations. This is interesting because even though only 17 percent were involved, 62 percent of the respondents held a positive view of minority student organizations—still something prevented 45 percent from being involved despite their positive view. This study also sought to identify the characteristics that are not significant in predicting involvement in these types of organizations.

Other studies have also examined minority student organizations and their effects on diverse students and have also found mixed results, especially on their perceptions. To date, there are those that will argue that such student organizations promote balkanization—that they continue to promote fragmentation or division campuses by minority students into smaller groups that hinder full-integration and interactions. Yet, studies have found that for some

minority students, they see ethnic/racial student organizations as a sanctuary, a safe haven, where they feel more comfortable from more alienating environments that are less welcoming (Berol, Camper, Pigott, Nadolsky, & Serris, 1983). As Astin, Trevino, & Wingard (1991) found these groups are in fact viewed as sources of needed support for minority students. Still, on the hand, Astin et al (1991), and others (Chavez, 1982) also noted that some minority students and their white counterparts viewed ethnic/racial student organizations more as a barrier that prevents minority students from interacting with others.

As Trevino noted, in contrast, other scholars have proposed that ethnic/racial student organizations play a very positive role in the collegiate experience of minority students. Montelongo (2003) examined the nature of Chicana/o and Puerto Rican student experiences with Latina/o, minority, and other college student organizations, and the relative influence of involvement, if any, on satisfaction with college, participation in extracurricular activities, and academic achievement as measured by overall grade point average. His findings suggest that there are distinct differences amongst diverse Latino college students. His results indicate Chicana/o students feel more a part of the student life on campus and see college student organizations as making students more independent, see minority student organizations develop family-like relationships amongst its members, and see Latina/o student organizations as empowering the Latina/o student and contributing to the overall leadership development of Latina/o students. Furthermore, Chicana/o students also report that these groups enhance college connections and create a “home away from home” for students. Whereas Puerto Rican college students are more likely to see ethnic clustering in college as segregating students from the rest of the college community. Similarly, this study considered the experiences of Puerto Rican and Other Latino college students.



Montelongo (2003) also found that Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students reveal that they prefer involvement in groups that focus on both academic and special interest activities. Moreover, he found that despite a wide variety of organization types available for students to join, most prefer to keep their involvement within one type of minority or Latina/o student organization. Lastly, the Chicana/o and Puerto Rican student participants at the Midwestern PWI in his study also saw minority student organizations as channels to educate and advocate for the Latina/o community through political activism. Hence, an interest in civic awareness and commitment to becoming a community leader as outcomes in this study.

Similarly, the positive effects are documented for other racial and ethnic minority students. Even more recently, Musseus (2008) examined the role of ethnic student organizations in fostering African-American and Asian American students' cultural adjustment and membership at predominantly White institutions. Driving this study was the fact that over half of all racial/ethnic minority students matriculating at 4-year colleges fail to graduate within 6 years. One explanation he noted for those low graduation rates is minority students' inability to find membership in the cultures and subcultures of their respective campuses. Thus, his qualitative study was focused on understanding the role of ethnic student organizations in fostering minority students' adjustment to and membership in the cultures of a predominantly White institution. His findings indicate that ethnic student organizations constituted critical structured opportunities of cultural familiarity, vehicles for cultural expression and advocacy, and sources of cultural validation for participants—adding to their sense of belonging and support.

Amongst other minority students, it has been found that Black student organizations contribute to Black students' integration into college and to their satisfaction with overall

campus student life (Allen, 1985). Amongst Asian American students Chew and Ogi (1987) similarly found Asian American student organizations to be a similar structured opportunity on campus for students to interact with other students of similar background and interest, and provide a social support outlet on campus. Even amongst smaller groups of Native American Indian students, ethnic/racial student organizations have been shown to serve as a source of social support, and enrich the cultural climate on campus (Hoover and Jacobs, 1992; Jackson, Smith, and Hill, 2003.)

Amongst Latinos college students, Montenegro (2003) noted a small number of studies on ethnic/racial student organizations participation. He noted the knowledge gap on the limited empirical research on college and student characteristics that predicted Latino college student organization participation as well as the outcomes associated with such participation (Treviño, 1992). Generally, it is understood that students are drawn to participate with student groups because students identify with the group's image, goals, objectives, and members (Fuertes, Cothran, and Sedlacek (1991, P. 12). In their study, Fuertes et al, found that once ethnic/racial student organization emerged on campus, a significant (20 percent) of Latino college student joined.

Participating in ethnic/racial student organizations appears to offset the negative, unsupportive, chilly-campus climate for minority college students. In fact, Mocosco (1995) argued that Latino college student organizations fostered a "culture of comfort" that allowed Latino college students to build a home away from home. Furthermore, participation in such organizations provided Latino students a sense of community, and student enhanced relationships at the university (Fuertes, et al. 1991). Montenegro (2003) contended, that by enhancing the campus and community could influence student involvement for Latino college

students and could impact overall student development. It is here, that I position the current study to determine the influence of participation in ethnic and racial student organizations on leadership and civic outcomes amongst Latino college student.

## **Outcomes**

### **Leadership Development**

As stated previously, quantitative studies have found that student involvement in student organizations has a positive effect on student leadership development (Astin, 1993, 1999; Hillison 1984); similarly, studies on ethnic/racial student organizations has been shown to have a positive effect on leadership amongst Latino and other minority college students (Montelongo, 2003; Treviño, 1992). Van De Valk and Constan (2011) state recent interest in studying social aspects of leadership has brought attention to the relationship between leadership and social capital. Although, they question the causal inference of this relationship, they do not dispute that a relationship between leadership and social capital exists.

Furthermore, Hurtado and Carter's study reveals that sense of belonging can manifest in different ways by forming affiliations with a larger community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Núñez (2009) noted that "perceptions of racial climate and connections with external communities (including family, social, geographic, and religious communities outside the college) have been found to be significant predictors of sense of belonging and other measures of a successful adjustment to college" (p. 24). Her findings further suggest that traditional interpretations of social integration may be less applicable to understanding the transitions of minority college students.

Further, Núñez (2009) noted social capital in the university setting can indicate the degree to which students perceive social cohesion in the university and feel that their connections

with social networks are supportive (Bourdieu, 1986; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001, 2004). This will be examined through student participation in ethnic/racial student organizations. Broadly speaking, within a higher education context – and in this study - social capital can be defined as the capacity for social networks to facilitate educational advancement and outcomes (Núñez, 2009; Bourdieu, 1986; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001, 2004). Furthermore, extending notions of habitus, research has shown that connections with social networks (including, student organizations) can generate feelings of reciprocity to and trust in the community and the institutions with which one co-exist—it is these attitudes and actions related to these motivations that constitute a form of social capital (Coleman, 1998) that will now be examined with ethnic/racial student organizations.

### **Civic Capital: Developing Civic Awareness and Importance of Becoming a Community Leader**

Schuh and Laverty (1983) studied student leaders on multiple campuses and examined the effects of participating in student organizations and found that leadership positions were found to have a positive effect on increased participation in community-based civic organizations. Moreover, they found students to be more aware and involved in community activities, even after their terms as college student organization leaders ended. Their study emphasized that participating in student groups was associated with interest in community concerns and service involvement. They argued that extracurricular involvement in college student organizations produced informed citizens who actively participated in addressing issues that are of interest to them. These students viewed community involvement in a positive light and saw their involvement as directly affecting their leadership skills. Their finding prompts my inquiry on the outcomes of leadership, development of civic awareness, and reported change in

importance of becoming a community leader in college. This study extends these outcomes beyond student leaders and focus on a larger representative Latina/o college student population, and examine if self-reported participation in ethnic/racial student organizations and other college activities and environments yield a similar effect on Latino college students.

### **Summary**

Theoretical frameworks guiding student retention and engagement have evolved to be more inclusive of minority and non-traditional students. Using Astin's Theory of Student Involvement that places a student time as the most important institutional resource as well as Nora, Barlow, and Crisp's (2005) Student/Institution Engagement Theoretical Framework, this study examined student background characteristics, as well as institutional characteristics, involvement and interactions that predict student involvement in ethnic/racial student organizations while in college. Astin (1993) found that participation in extracurricular activities developed skills that assisted in the practical realities of living after college. He also found that when it comes to the student's affective development, one generalization seems clear: "students values, beliefs, and aspirations tend to change in the direction of the dominant values, beliefs, and aspirations of the peer group" (p. 398). Building on these finding, this study examined to what extent, if any, participation in such organizations effects key social and civic outcomes.

### CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

As the literature shows, the vast majority of research on minority (ethnic/racial) student organizations is qualitative in nature and often based on single institution studies using interviews or focus groups (Delgado-Romero and Hernandez, 2002; Guiffrida, 2003; Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel, 1991; Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, and Treviño, 1997). Such studies have been instrumental to understand the social experiences of more diverse college students. Considering the growing diversity amongst student populations at American colleges and universities in the last three decades, and the regional concentrations of ethnic and racial minority populations, these qualitative studies have given a glimpse and help understand the dynamics, relationships, and outcomes associated with participation in race and ethnic based student organizations. However, with the increases of more diverse students now attending colleges and available national data, we can further quantify and test for particular relationships and outcomes. Specifically, larger—multi-institutional—quantitative research is needed on the growing Latina/o college student population to further understand their experiences. This will assist institutional leaders and policy makers to prepare and adapt structured opportunities for the youngest and one of the fastest minority groups in the U.S. Thus, the purpose of this study was to continue to better understand Latina/o college students and the civic outcomes associated with collegiate experiences in culturally relevant peer group environments.

The study utilized a two-phase approach to study Latino student participation in ethnic and racial student organizations. Using the literature on student involvement and Latinos college student engagement, the first part of the study examined the characteristics of students that predict involvement in ethnic/racial student organizations. The study examined student pre-college experiences and background characteristics to determine the traits of those students who

reported participating in this activity. Using the binary independent variable of students who reported participating in ethnic/racial student organizations, this step provided a better understanding of the comparison group to subsequently examine the relationship between reported participation and other variables on leadership and civic outcomes. More specifically, this study sought to observe if a relationship existed with Latino college student's participation in ethnic and racial student organizations and its effect on civic awareness, developing a commitment to public service by becoming a community leader, and on leadership ability. This chapter presents further details on research questions and hypotheses, research design, population and sample, data source, variables, and analyses. Subsequently, I address the limitations of this study while acknowledging its contribution to the existing body of literature.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of Latina/o college students who participate in ethnic/racial student organizations?
2. After controlling for background characteristics, predispositions, and college environments, what is the effect, if any, of institutional factors, college experiences and activities, including participating in racial/ethnic student organizations, amongst Latino college students on (1) civic awareness; (2) change in commitment of becoming a community leader, and (3) changes in self-reported leadership ability?

### **Research Design**

Adding to the understanding of ethnic/racial/minority student organizations on college and university campuses and their effect on students - as well as supplementing earlier qualitative research - the present study builds on the limited number of longitudinal quantitative

studies on this topic (Treviño, 1992), and on Latina/o college students. Generalizability is a driving force behind this study, which informed the research design and models subsequently. The purpose is aimed to generalize the characteristics of a sample population and draw inferences about characteristics, behaviors, and outcomes of this population (Babbie, 1990)—in this case longitudinal changes in Latino college students who participate in ethnic/racial student organizations in college, and corresponding leadership and civic outcomes.

The research design consisted of a two-phase analysis: an exploratory study of individual and environmental characteristics that predict involvement in ethnic and racial student organizations amongst Latino college students, and a subsequent analysis of outcomes associated with participation, along with other college experiences that included diversity activities and institutional factors. Two particular datasets were utilized to answer the aforementioned research questions and address the hypotheses below. The following sections will further elaborate on population and sample, data source, conceptual model, variables, analyses performed—and limitations

## **Hypotheses**

A number of hypotheses were derived from the research questions that guided this study as well as from the outcomes being examined. Below are key hypothesis and their rationale that were tested in this study.

**Hypothesis 1:** There are key characteristics of Latino college students who participate in ethnic/racial student organizations in college, including student demographic characteristics, self-ratings, values and attitudes, as well as reported high school activities, and location of residence while in college.



Rationale 1: Previous research on student involvement has found general characteristics of students who participate in student organizations more broadly. For example, Astin (1999) found that resident students were more likely to be involved in student clubs and organizations. Similarly, Craig and Warner (1991) found that multi-cultural and first-generation college students were more likely to be members; whereas, Berk and Goebel (1987) found high school participation/involvement to be an indicator of the same participation amongst students in college. Furthermore, I anticipated student place of residence will also show to have an effect (Astin, 1973; Chickering, 1978).

**Hypothesis 2:** There are key institutional characteristics that also impact student participation in ethnic/racial student organizations, including institutional type (selectivity and size) and campus climate measures.

Rationale 2: Even though college campuses have become more diverse, I believe there are fundamental institutional variables that effect student's likelihood to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations. Research has shown factors such as institutional selectivity affect participation in student organizations (Astin, 1977; Pascarella and Terrenzini, 2005). Chickering (1978) also found that the size of an institution is inversely related to the opportunities for students to get involved. More critically, Hurtado (1990) found that in environments that students feel to be less inclusive and hostile leads students towards affinity groups, such as ethnic/racial student organizations.

**Hypothesis 3:** Participating in ethnic/racial student organizations will have a positive effect on leadership amongst Latino college students.

Rationale 3: Based on previous research, I expected the present study to find a positive relationship between Latino's participation in student organizations and leadership development

(Astin, 1999; Treviño, 1992; Astin, 1993; Hillison, 1984), leadership skills (Montenegro, 2003) and practical competence (Dunkel and Schus, 1998).

**Hypothesis 4:** Student involvement in ethnic/racial student organizations yields a positive change on civic commitments in terms of civic awareness and the importance of becoming community leaders. That is, I hypothesized that it is greater amongst those Latino students who do participate and are members of ethnic/racial student organizations.

Rationale 4: Given the historical context and emergence of ethnic/racial student organizations on college and university campuses, these organizations raise awareness and work toward changing society and the institution (Treviño, 1992; Gomez-Quiñonez, 1990; Astin, 1975). Moreover, considering earlier research on student leaders on multiple campuses, Schuh and Lavery (1983) also found that student leaders were found to have a positive effect on increased participation in community-based civic organizations, found to be more aware and involved in community activities, even after their terms as college student organization leaders ended, thus prompting this civic outcome.

### **Data Source**

The data for this study was collected as part of the annual Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles. The CIRP is a national longitudinal study of students and faculty at American colleges and universities. It has been collecting data on college students since 1966, and is considered the largest and oldest empirical study of higher education in the United States. CIRP college student data comes from three main surveys, one for incoming freshman (The Freshmen Survey, TFS), another given after the completion of the first year (Your First Year in College Survey, YFCY), and a final survey administered at the end of the fourth year (College

Senior Survey, CSS). The data covered by these surveys ranges from basic demographic and background information to student behaviors, values, and beliefs. Student responses on two instruments, the Freshman Survey (TFS) and the College Senior Survey (CSS), provided the data for the present study. Relying on matched data from student survey data at two time-points allowed for analysis of inquiry to proposed research questions, including student characteristics (predispositions and background information) at college entry (2004) and college experiences and outcomes collected in the fourth year of study (2008).

In 2004, and every year since 1966, American colleges and universities were invited to participate in the CIRP Fall administration of TFS in an effort to collect data and student profiles of each entering class of students entering college. The Freshmen Survey was administered to all entering first-time, full-time freshmen during the summer before or at fall orientation of the first year in college. The instrument requested information on students' academic and social backgrounds as well as their expectations of college experiences. During the 2004 administration of the TFS, there was an intentional recruitment of minority-serving institutions through a National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant, making it a more ideal and appropriate sample for this study including a larger number of underrepresented minority students—including Latinos. This also allowed for me to control for Latina/os at Hispanic Serving Institutions and emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions (characterized by their enrollment of Latina/o students). By the end of the administration, the CIRP TFS included data from the entering class of 2004, which represented a total of 289,452 students at 720 of the nation's baccalaureate college and universities.

As a follow-up to the TFS, CIRP collected data four years later at the end of these students' college experience through the CSS. The senior survey four years later, served as an

"exit" survey requesting information on a broad range of students' college experiences. For example, students reported their academic achievement, satisfaction with the college experience, values, goals, and other post college plans. When used as a follow-up instrument to the TFS, the CSS provided valuable longitudinal data on students' growth during college across a number of areas and domains. With its focus on a broad range of college student experiences, including academic achievement and engagement, satisfaction with the college experience, values, attitudes, goals, degree aspirations, career plans, and other post-college plans, institutional and other researchers have used the CSS to study topics such as college retention, leadership development, faculty mentoring, civic engagement, student development and learning, and college satisfaction (Liu, Ruiz, DeAngelo, and Pryor, 2009). In 2008, there were 23,423 students at 148 institutions represented in the CSS.

Institutional level data was also compiled from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for the colleges and universities represented in the dataset. Variables such as percentage of Latina/o enrollments, size, selectivity, and other institutional factors for 2004/08 were merged with the student level dataset for institutional characteristics being considered in this study (selectivity, size, etc).

### **Population and Sample**

This study examined a subset of students who entered college in 2004 and completed the 2008 CSS. Since this study focused on Latina/o college students, and to infer generalizable findings, only those students who were first-time, full-time students who indicated their ethnic background as Mexican-American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, and/or other Latino were included in this sample. Furthermore, to conform to conceptual guiding framework, students must have also listed a Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc) or higher as the highest academic degree they

intended to obtain on TFS. There were 2,164 Latina/o students with matched sample data, including students who reported Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and students classified as “Other Latino”. The rationale for choosing Latina/os from the larger data base was to identify heterogeneity among the growing Latina/o population, and this sample constitutes the largest of similar studies to date.

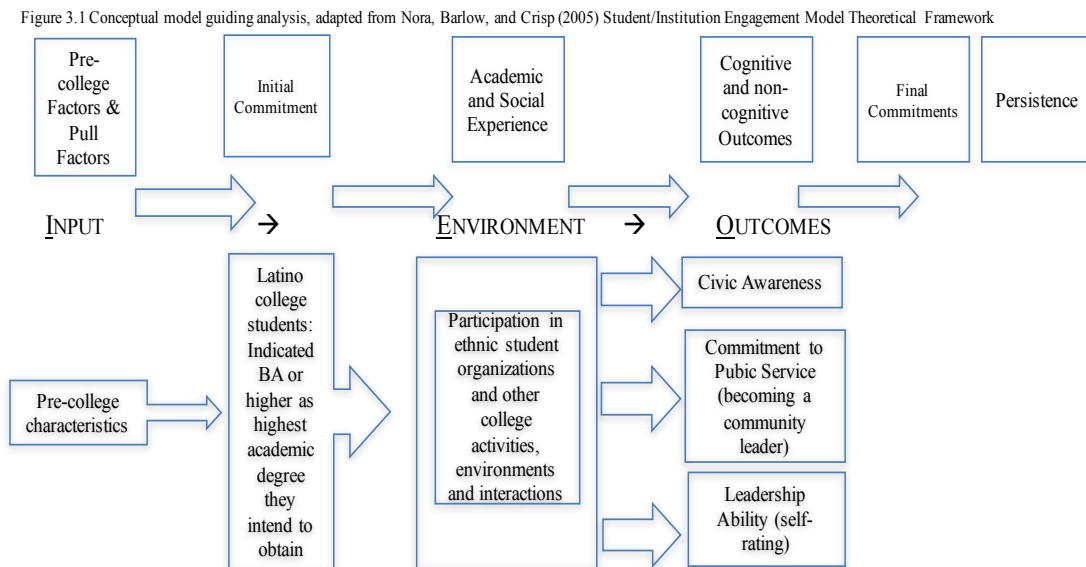
### **Conceptual Model**

As previously discussed, I turned to elements of one theory and a more inclusive framework to better guide the present study. Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement (1984, 1999) and Nora, Barlow, and Crisp’s (2005) Student/Institution Engagement Theoretical Framework. The previous work followed a temporal sequencing, also simplified by Astin’s (1991) Input-Environmental-Output model for assessment of student outcomes. This archetype suggests that in studying outcomes (or outputs), one must control for *inputs*—or background characteristics of students along with predispositions—to determine the effect of college environments on proposed outcomes. A key component of longitudinal analysis is not only to control for student background but also for students’ predispositions using key pretest measures to assess the impact of particular college experiences on changes in outcomes.

Although the guiding framework was adapted from a more comprehensive persistence model (Nora et al, 2005), it placed focus on key institutional and environmental variables, and tested these on new outcomes for Latina/o students. Using an adapted version of Nora et al., Student/Institution Engagement Framework Model (2005), I considered important variables and factors that have been more inclusive of minority, low-income, and non-traditional college students. Furthermore, it is a model that researchers have recently turned to in studying Latina/o college students (see Castellanos, Gloria, Kamimura, 2005; Oseguera, Denson, Hurtado, 2009;

Arellano, 2011.) As such, the study examined predispositions and pre-college characteristics; institutional and environmental variables that were hypothesized to predict participation in ethnic/racial student organizations; as well as, the effect of college diversity experiences on leadership and civic outcomes.

Furthermore, Figure 3.1 shows the adapted conceptual model that builds on Nora et al. (2005) along with essential principles from the model that guided the theory of student involvement. The majority of the key components, however, are based on the prior extensive research on underrepresented students in predicting persistence or decisions to reenroll in college each year. The model indicates that cognitive and non-cognitive development areas are key to sustaining commitments to stay in college –and outcomes associated with participating in higher education opportunities.



Therefore, this study focused specifically on the effect of environments, college activities and interactions with diverse peers. The variable blocks for the independent variables on each outcome are discussed and presented in separate tables (respectively). Taken together, the

theoretical and conceptual models guiding this study, provided a map of the types of variables that were examined, how they are temporally ordered, and key concepts that they represent.

These measures of the variables are discussed in sequenced order in the next section.

### **Variables/Measures**

Variables considered in this study were categorically organized into input, environments, and outcomes. As previously discussed, the first part of this study predicted the student background characteristics associated with Latino college student's participation in ethnic/racial student organizations. Equally important in the study of student engagement are institutional and environmental independent variables (environments) shown to have an effect on student involvement. These institutional variables consider broader institutional characteristics (i.e. selectivity, size, etc.) or measures that vary between institutions (e.g. whether or not campuses have racial/student organizations); whereas, environment independent variables are specific college environments and experiences that vary between individuals within institutions, such as student participation in ethnic/racial student organizations. Once these individual and institutional variables are determined, they were used to test for the leadership and civic outcomes associated with participation in racial/ethnic organizations controlling for other college experiences. Table 3.2 (civic awareness), 3.3 (importance of becoming a community leader), 3.4 (leadership ability) list variable blocks for each respective outcome and indicate the measures in the study and how each were operationalized. Although many of these variables were used within the models for each outcome, the social agency variable was omitted from the predicting commitment to becoming a community leader, because that single-item is a part of the social agency factor (Appendix D). Similarly, leadership ability was used as a direct pretest (Table

Table 3.1  
 Predicting Participation in Ethnic/Racial Student Organizations

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	Scale (as recoded)
Participation in ethnic/racial student organizations	0 = No, 1 =Yes
<i>Background Characteristics</i>	
Puerto Rican (Mexican American)	0 = No, 1 =Yes
Other Latino (Mexican American)	
Sex	1 = Male, 2 = Female
Family Income	1 = Less than \$10,000, 2 = \$10,000 to 14,999, 3 = \$15,000 to 19,999, 4 = \$20,000 to 24,999, 5 = \$25,000 to 29,999, 6 = \$30,000 to 39,999, 7 = \$40,000 to 49,999, 8 = \$50,000 to 59,999, 9 = \$60,000 to 74,999, 10 = \$75,000 to 99,999, 11 = \$100,000 to 149,999, 12 = \$150,000 to 199,999, 13 = \$200,000 to 249,999, 14 = \$250,000 or more
Native English Speaker	1 = No, 2 =Yes
High School Participated in Organized Demonstrations	1 = Not at all, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = Frequently
High School Required Community Service for Graduation Cooperativeness	1 = Lowest 10%, 2 = Below average, 3 = Average, 4 = Above average, 5 = Highest 10%
Drive to Achieve	
Leadership Ability	
Self-confidence (social)	
<i>Institution Characteristic Variables</i>	
Size (total enrollment)	1 = 0-10,000, 2 = 10,001-20,000, 3 = 20,001-30,000, 4= 30,001+
Selectivity	Average combined SAT scores (400-1600) divided by 100
Hispanic Serving Institution	1 = No, 2 = Yes
Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution	
Live in Residence Hall	1 = No, 2 = Yes
Live with Family	
Live in Fraternity or Sorority	
<i>College Experiences</i>	
Attended a Racial/Cultural Awareness Workshop	1 = No, 2 = Yes
Participated in Political Demonstration	1 = Not at all, 2= Occasionally, 3 = Frequently
Working for Pay (HPW)	1 = Non, 2 = Less than one hour, 2 = 1-2 hours, 3 = 3-5 hours, 4 = 6-10 hours, 5 = 11-15 hours, 6 = 16-20 hours, 7 = over 20 hours
<i>College Interactions</i>	
Positive Cross Racial Interactions	1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Very often
Negative Cross Racial Interactions	



3.4), and two additional independent variables were included on the leadership development model based on previous literature (Table 3.5). Finally, the variable “discussing politics” was used as a proxy for the civic awareness, since the measure did not have a direct pretest.

### **Predicting characteristics of student participation in ethnic/racial student organizations**

The first-step of this study aimed to identify characteristics predicting student participation in ethnic racial student organizations. Thus, “participated in ethnic/racial student organization” served as the outcome to the first part of the study. Students were asked on the CSS to indicate (mark yes or no) on activities they had participated “since entering college” (2008 CCS, question 6.). Given the binary dependent variable, logistic regression was used to determine the likelihood of institutional and environmental independent variables in predicting participation. The remaining Latina/o students were referred to as non-participants on this intermediate dependent variable. This variable was recoded: 0 = non-participant in ethnic and racial student organization (referent group), 1 = participated in ethnic/racial student organizations, suitable for a binomial logistic regression. Table 3.1 demonstrates this outcome and variables considered in predicting characteristics of students who reported participating in ethnic/racial student organizations.

### **Leadership and Civic Outcomes**

The key outcomes for the study added another element to those previously examined by considering leadership and civic outcomes associated with particular co-curricular experiences. Given interest in an educated Latino population, it is of particular interest to examine broader civic outcomes associated with college amongst the Latino population. With a student’s years in college proving to be a time where one questions, challenges, as well as develops their values,

beliefs, and skills, this study looked at important leadership and civic outcomes that can have a profound impact on an individual’s life—as well as society— after college. Principally, this study examined the outcomes of student civic awareness, change in importance of becoming a community leader, and change in self-reported leadership ability. The former, civic awareness measure is a construct taken together from items on the CSS, including: understanding of the problems facing your community, understanding national issues, and understanding global issues (see table 3.2).

Table 3.2  
Outcomes

Civic Capital Outcomes		Scale
Civic Awareness	(Compared with when you first entered college, how would you describe your: Understanding of the problems facing your community, understanding of social problems facing our nation, Understanding of global issues.)	1 = Much weaker, 2 = Weaker, 3 = No change, 4 = Stronger, 5 = Much stronger
Commitment to Become a Community Leader	(Indicate the importance to you personally of: Becoming a Community Leader)	1 = Not important, 2 = Somewhat important, 3 = Very important, 4 = Essential
Leadership Ability	(Compared with when you first entered this college, how would you now describe your: Leadership Abilities.)	1 = Much weaker, 2 = Weaker, 3 = No change, 4 = Stronger, 5 = Much stronger

The civic awareness factor is a CIRP construct that has been validated through IRT to represent a change in understanding of local (community), national, and international issues (Sharkness, DeAngelo, and Pryor, 2010; also see Appendix A). The civic awareness construct is comprised of three-items as is shown in Table 3.2 that measured the extent to which a student would describe their understanding of these issues since entering college. Students were asked,

"compared to when you entered college, how would you describe your: understanding of the problems facing your community, understanding of social problems facing our nation, and understanding of global issues." Each of these responses was on a five-point scale: much weaker, weaker, no change, stronger, and much stronger. This question was not asked on the Freshmen Survey and a proxy measure (frequency of discussing politics) served as a pre-test to capture some of the variance in the regression model.

### **Input**

Taking into account previous research on student involvement along with student/institutional engagement models, the present study accounted and controlled for variables and factors shown to influence more diverse, minority, low-income, and non-traditional student populations.

Given, Latina/o student's expression of initial commitment and goal of B.A. or higher at four-year institutions, we can derive from earlier research, important independent variables, pre-college background factors and pull factors (*pre-college characteristics*). Following the adapted Latina/o college student social and civic outcomes framework, pre-college dispositions and background characteristics were entered in the models first. These variables included: sex, family income, high school activity participation, self-ratings, student involvement and civic engagement predispositions, and goals. Moreover, predispositions included performed volunteer work in high school, high school required service and available leadership self-rating (pretest). Finally, variables related to Latina/o college students were also considered given their significance, including family income, English as one's native language, and working for pay (hours per week) (see tables 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5, respectively).

Table 3.3  
Predictors of Civic Awareness

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Scale (as recoded)</i>
Civic Awareness	1= Much weaker, 2= Weaker, 3= No change, 4= Stronger, 5= Much stronger
<i>Pretest: Discussed politics (2004)</i>	1 = Not at all, 2 = Occasionally 3 = Frequently
<i>Background Characteristics</i>	
Puerto Rican (Mexican American)	0 = No, 1 =Yes
Other Latino (Mexican American)	
Sex	1 = Male, 2 = Female
Family Income	1 = Less than \$10,000, 2 = \$10,000 to 14,999, 3 = \$15,000 to 19,999, 4 = \$20,000 to 24,999, 5 = \$25,000 to 29,999, 6 = \$30,000 to 39,999, 7 = \$40,000 to 49,999, 8 = \$50,000 to 59,999, 9 = \$60,000 to 74,999, 10 = \$75,000 to 99,999, 11 = \$100,000 to 149,999, 12 = \$150,000 to 199,999, 13 = \$200,000 to 249,999, 14 = \$250,000 or more
Native English Speaker	1 = No, 2 = Yes
High School Participated in Organized Demonstrations	1 = Not at all, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = Frequently
High School Required Community Service for Graduation	
<i>Institution Characteristic Variables</i>	
Size (total enrollment)	1 = 0-10,000, 2 = 10,001-20,000, 3 = 20,001-30,000, 4= 30,001+
Selectivity	Average combined SAT scores (400-1600) divided by 100
Hispanic Serving Institution	1 = No, 2 = Yes
Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution	
<i>College Experiences</i>	
Participated in Ethnic Racial Student Organizations	1 = No, 2 = Yes
Attended a Racial/Cultural Awareness Workshop	
Participated in Political Demonstration	1 = Not at all, 2= Occasionally, 3= Frequently
Worked on a local, state, or national campaign	
Voted in Student Election	
Performed Volunteer Work	
Demonstration for/against war	
Social Agency	1 = Not important, 2 = Somewhat important, 3 = Very important, 4 = Essential
Leadership (Self-rating)	1= Much weaker, 2= Weaker, 3= No change, 4= Stronger, 5= Much stronger
Working for Pay (HPW)	1 = Non, 2 = Less than one hour, 2 = 1-2 hours, 3 = 3-5 hours, 4 = 6-10 hours, 5 = 11-15 hours, 6 = 16-20 hours, 7 = over 20 hours
<i>College Interactions</i>	
Positive Cross Racial Interactions	1=Never, 2=Seldom 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Very often
Negative Cross Racial Interactions	

## **Environments**

Environmental variables were organized as between institution and within institution measures. The first, institutional characteristic variables considered size (total enrollment), selectivity, Hispanic Serving Institutions, emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions (with Predominantly White Institutions as the referent). To consider measures of campus climate, the model also considered cross-racial interactions (Arellano, 2011). Each of the previous has been shown to affect college student involvement and engagement, and was tested on a Latino college student population as well as with a particular type of college co-curricular and social experience. Similarly, college experience variables were considered. Within institution variables are more specific experiences that shape and influence college student experiences and their development but these can vary from student to student. Again, previous research guides us to the following variables: freshmen residence (in residence halls, with family, in a fraternity/sorority), attending cultural/racial awareness workshop, cross-racial interactions (positive and negative), and whether or not a student participated in political demonstrations during college.

## **Analyses**

This study drew on quantitative methods specifically, regression analysis. Adding to the limited understanding of experiences in ethnic/racial student organizations, this study used a quantitative analysis to extend what a number of qualitative studies have found. In reference to research question posed, logistic regression was used to examine the characteristics of those

Table 3.4  
 Predictors of Commitment to Becoming a Community Leader

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Scale (as recoded)</i>
Importance of Becoming a Community Leader	1= Much weaker, 2= Weaker, 3= No change, 4= Stronger, 5= Much stronger
Pretest (Importance of Becoming a Community Leader, 2004)	1 = Important, 2 = Somewhat important 3 = Very important, 4 = Essential
<i>Background Characteristics</i>	
Puerto Rican (Mexican American)	0 = No, 1 =Yes
Other Latino (Mexican American)	
Sex	1 = Male, 2 = Female
Family Income	1 = Less than \$10,000, 2 = \$10,000 to 14,999, 3 = \$15,000 to 19,999, 4 = \$20,000 to 24,999, 5 = \$25,000 to 29,999, 6 = \$30,000 to 39,999, 7 = \$40,000 to 49,999, 8 = \$50,000 to 59,999, 9 = \$60,000 to 74,999, 10 = \$75,000 to 99,999, 11 = \$100,000 to 149,999, 12 = \$150,000 to 199,999, 13 = \$200,000 to 249,999, 14 = \$250,000 or more
Native English Speaker	1 = No, 2 - Yes
High School Participated in Organized Demonstrations	1 = Not at all, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = Frequently
High School Required Community Service for Graduation	
<i>Institution Characteristic Variables</i>	
Size (total enrollment)	1 = 0-10,000, 2 = 10,001-20,000, 3 = 20,001-30,000, 4= 30,001+
Selectivity	Average combined SAT scores (400-1600) divided by 100
Hispanic Serving Institution	1 = No, 2 = Yes
Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution	
<i>College Experiences</i>	
Participated in Ethnic/Racial Student Organizations	1 = No, 2 = Yes
Attended a Racial/Cultural Awareness Workshop	
Participate in Political Demonstration	1 = Not at all, 2= Occasionally, 3= Frequently
Worked on a local, state, or national campaign	
Voted in Student Election	
Performed Volunteer Work	
Demonstration for/against war	
Discussed Politics	
Leadership Ability (Self-rating)	1= Much weaker, 2= Weaker, 3= No change, 4= Stronger, 5= Much stronger
Working for Pay (HPW)	1 = Non, 2 = Less than one hour, 2 = 1-2 hours, 3 = 3-5 hours, 4 = 6-10 hours, 5 = 11-15 hours, 6 = 16-20 hours, 7 = over 20 hours
<i>College Interactions</i>	
Positive Cross Racial Interactions	1=Never, 2=Seldom 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Very often
Negative Cross Racial Interactions	

Table 3.5  
 Predictors of Latina/o College Student Leadership Ability

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Scale (as recoded)</i>
Self-rating: Leadership (2008)	1= Much weaker, 2= Weaker, 3= No change, 4= Stronger, 5= Much stronger
Pretest (Self-rating: Leadership, 2004)	1 = Lowest 10%, 2 = Below average, 3 = Average, 4 = Above average, 5 = Highest 10%
<i>Background Characteristics</i>	
Puerto Rican (Mexican American)	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Other Latino (Mexican American)	
Sex	1 = Male, 2 = Female
Family Income	1 = Less than \$10,000, 2 = \$10,000 to 14,999, 3 = \$15,000 to 19,999, 4 = \$20,000 to 24,999, 5 = \$25,000 to 29,999, 6 = \$30,000 to 39,999, 7 = \$40,000 to 49,999, 8 = \$50,000 to 59,999, 9 = \$60,000 to 74,999, 10 = \$75,000 to 99,999, 11 = \$100,000 to 149,999, 12 = \$150,000 to 199,999, 13 = \$200,000 to 249,999, 14 = \$250,000 or more
Native English Speaker	1 = No, 2 = Yes
High School Participated in Organized Demonstrations	1 = Not at all, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = Frequently
High School Required Community Service for Graduation	
<i>Institution Characteristic Variables</i>	
Size (total enrollment)	1 = 0-10,000, 2 = 10,001-20,000, 3 = 20,001-30,000, 4= 30,001+
Selectivity	Average combined SAT scores (400-1600) divided by 100
Hispanic Serving Institution	1 = No, 2 = Yes
Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution	
<i>College Experiences</i>	
Participated in Ethnic/Racial Student Organizations	1 = No, 2 = Yes
Attended a Racial/Cultural Awareness Workshop	
Participate in Political Demonstration	1 = Not at all, 2= Occasionally, 3= Frequently
Worked on a local, state, or national campaign	
Voted in Student Election	
Performed Volunteer Work	
Demonstration for/against war	
Discussed Politics	
Social Agency	1 = Not important, 2 = Somewhat important, 3 = Very important, 4 = Essential
Working for Pay (HPW)	1 = Non, 2 = Less than one hour, 2 = 1-2 hours, 3 = 3-5 hours, 4 = 6-10 hours, 5 = 11-15 hours, 6 = 16-20 hours, 7 = over 20 hours
<i>College Interactions</i>	
Positive Cross Racial Interactions	1=Never, 2=Seldom 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Very often
Negative Cross Racial Interactions	

students who participated in these organizations. Logistic regression was appropriate as students either reported participating, or not—a binary variable (yes/no). Further, a subsequent multiple regression model controlled for pre-college characteristics and *habitus* (environments) including participation in ethnic/racial student organizations in order to predict its effect on Latina/o college students' social and civic outcomes. Of particular interest was the impact of involvement in ethnic student organizations.

### **Binomial Logistic Regression**

To answer the first research question, logistic regression was used to determine the characteristics of students who participated in ethnic/racial student organizations. Logistic regression was an appropriate method given that the binary outcome—students either reported participating or not. Binomial (or binary) logistic regression refers to the instance in which a variable or outcome can take on only two possible outcomes (e.g., participated in ethnic/racial student organization or did not participate). Coding of the outcome was coded as "0" and "1" to help with interpretation of analysis, where the reference group was coded "0" and indicate non-participation. The target group (those who reported participating in ethnic/racial student organization) was coded as "1".

Logistic regression is used to predict the odds of being a case based on the predictor(s). In the case of this study and the first research question, the study attempted to predict the characteristics of participation. According to Lameshow and Hosmer (2000), the odds are defined as the probability of a case divided by the probability of a non-case. The odds ratio is the primary measure of effect size in logistic regression and is computed to compare the odds that membership in one group will lead to a case outcome with the odds that membership in some



other group will lead to a case outcome. The odds ratio, denoted OR, is simply the odds of being a case for one group divided by the odds of being a case for another group. An odds ratio of one indicates that the odds of a case outcome are equally likely for both groups under comparison. The further the odds deviate from one, the stronger the relationship. In theory, the odds ratio has a floor of zero but no ceiling (upper limit) - theoretically, the odds ratio can increase infinitely (Lameshow and Hosmer, 2000).

The binary distribution has a mean equal to the proportion of cases, denoted P, and a variance equal to the product of cases and non-cases, PQ, wherein Q is equal to the proportion of non-cases or 1 - P (Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken, 2003). Given these statistics and relationships, the standard deviation is simply the square root of PQ.

### **Multivariate Regression Analysis**

Regression Analysis was the analytic procedure employed to examine the leadership and civic outcomes principal to the second research question in this study. Each outcome, or dependent variable, was examined with separate regressions. In each case, the variable indicating participation in ethnic/racial student organizations was placed in the regression analysis after background and other environmental institutional variables (e.g. residence, size, selectivity, etc.) but before other college activities. As in Trevino's study (1992) of impact of student participation in these same student organizations on outcomes, the purpose of this strategy (variable placement in model) was to examine the effect of participation in minority student organizations as other college experiences may share variance with this independent measure.

This multivariate regression analysis allowed for a temporal ordering of blocks of independent variables which assessed the influence of inputs and environments on outcomes

(Astin & Dey, 1997). Independent variables were blocked together based on common characteristics (e.g. background characteristics, college experiences, etc.) and then temporally placed into a model as guided by the conceptual framework guiding this study (Nora et al. 2005, Astin 1999). This method therefore considered student background characteristics before institutional variables and college experiences to assess how much variance earlier blocks of variables explain.

First, because of a generally strong student/institutional engagement framework guiding this study, blocked forced entry multiple regression analysis was conducted with independent variables on the entire sample of Latino college students. Independent variables were organized in blocks based on their common characteristics: corresponding pretest, background characteristics, institutional and environmental variables, participation in ethnic/racial student organizations, and intermediate outcomes. These blocks were based on temporal ordering with student characteristics entered before considering institutional contexts and college experiences. Also, independent variables were forced entered because these were previously shown to have a strong predictive relationship with the outcomes while others were theoretically driven. A general rule of thumb for multivariate analyses is that there are at least 10 cases for every variable included in a regression model. As such, variable selection was critical, less exploratory, and limited to those shown to predict student environment and minority student engagement.

To consider for differences amongst Latina/o ethnicities, the study also controlled for Puerto Rican and Other Latino, with Mexican-American as the referent category. Further, also a result of sample size, the p-values were examined ( $p < .05$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $p < .001$ ).

## **Limitations**

There were several limitations to the present study with regard to the data source, sample sizes, and research design. First, as with most quantitative research, survey measures used to answer the study's research questions are restricted due to the nature of secondary data analysis. That is, we are limited to variables, factors, and constructs from available data, or merge while maintaining the integrity of statistics and stringent scientific analysis. For example, the measure of participating in racial and ethnic student organizations serves as an aggregate to the hundreds of diverse student interest organizations on college campuses today, without an ability to differentiate between political, social, apolitical, Greek, and other ethnic and racial student organizations.

Compounding this, as with surveys in general, is the respondent interpretation of the question being asked. For example, with this particular question, and given the increase of Latino and Multicultural Greek-lettered organizations on college campuses, this variable could potentially include or omit students who would count as valid cases. Although, research has shown that these two types of organizations share a common mission and purpose, they too have distinct differences, primarily membership process; so, a Latino student may have indicated having “joined a fraternity or sorority,” but not their participation in “ethnic and racial student organizations” because of their inherent differences, and the idea of ethnic and racial student organizations are widely considered more politically-driven. Whereas, Latino/Multicultural fraternities and sororities are also ethnic/racial student organizations, a student may or may not have identified participation in both. Here, there is a potential loss of cases of those students who indicated their participation in having joined a fraternity or sorority, but are put in an aggregate with traditional and mostly White fraternal organizations.

Another limitation was the administration of the CSS four years after entry. Given that it is more likely for Latino and other minority students to take longer enrollment periods to graduate and complete their undergraduate education, it misses out on experiences after four years, but before they complete. Similarly, since this study included only first-time and full-time students, previous research has shown a large percentage of first-time and full-time Latino college students to begin their college careers at community colleges, further narrowing the population. Similarly, it also does not include transfer students, or non-traditional students who may have returned to college after an absence—classifications also common to Latino college students, and affecting overall sample size.

Sample size continues to be a limitation on quantitative inquiry on minority student populations. As such, I acknowledge the distinct difference amongst and within the nation's diverse Latino/Hispanic population, however as a result of available data, research is limited to examining this population as an aggregate. It would be more ideal, as a researcher, to examine the outcomes for each sub-Latino group respectively; however, even then, given the instrument and available data would have been limited to only three general ethnicities: Mexican-American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, and other Latino. Notwithstanding, this study significantly extends previous research and expands our understanding of Latino students' experiences, especially broadening our understanding of other—leadership and civic — outcomes associated with American higher education, for a growing and coming of college-age population.

Before discussing the implications of the study findings, it is necessary to acknowledge the students who participated in this study were freshmen in 2004 during George W. Bush's second term as President, and seniors in 2008, the same year Barack Obama was first elected President. Although the data may be considered dated with newer cohorts and data available,

they are still relevant given that these Latina/os are out of college now and part of the electorate. These students are now advancing in their professional careers or in graduate school. During this time that they were in college, the country began to experience the effects of the great recession that affected college students and their families as well as U.S. colleges and universities alike. The historical time, or “period effect” may have captured effects that may be due to national or societal events that affect particular cohorts of students as they develop (Hurtado, 2007), “thus the effects of college on specific outcomes may not be the same, or as significant, in all historical periods” (p. 109). This in itself would warrant research on this next cohort of Latina/o students to validate, or challenge these findings.

### **Summary**

Despite inherent limitations, the present study makes a significant contribution to the existing body of literature, our understanding of the experiences of the nation’s growing Latino college student population and college civic outcomes: civic awareness, developing a commitment to becoming a community leader, and change in self-rated leadership ability. Although, the leadership development has been examined with an earlier generation of Latino college students over 20 years ago, this study revisited these same outcomes with a new generation of Latino college students, and considering more diversity-related activities and cross-racial interactions. Perhaps, the most prevalent contribution of this study is the civic outcome now examined, and how college environments and experiences develop students’ civic awareness. Using a conceptual framework more inclusive of factors affecting minority and non-traditional student engagement, this study examined the characteristics of Latino college students who participated in ethnic/racial student organizations, and then examined the leadership and civic outcomes associated with participation.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study had two central questions guiding this analysis, and tests three outcomes. The first question is: “What are the characteristics of Latina/o college students who participate in ethnic/racial student organizations? This was conducted first to determine the extent to which early leadership training may occur in these organizations and subsequently translates into increases in civic leadership. The second research question addresses the predictors of three civic leadership outcomes: “After controlling for background characteristics, predispositions, and college environments, what is the effect, if any, of institutional factors, college experiences and activities, including participating in racial/ethnic student organizations, amongst Latino college students on (1) civic awareness; (2) change in commitment of becoming a community leader, and (3) changes in self-reported leadership ability? Subsequent analysis provides insight into the characteristics of Latina/o college students that predict student participation in racial/ethnic student organizations, their civic awareness and leadership aspirations. Although the data are derived from the cohort of college freshmen who graduated at the start of the Obama Administration (CSS, 2008), they first filled out the freshmen survey during the Bush Administration (2004). Given the U.S. current hyper-political climate that impact young adults, the findings have implications given the civic commitments that occur among students in American colleges and universities. The findings help colleges better understand Latina/o college students and their civic and leadership outcomes. Today, this study’s cohort of students who completed college during the Obama administration, are currently young adults in work or graduate school environments.

The following sections will outline descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of Latina/o college students who participate in ethnic/racial student organizations. Using logistic

regression analysis, the study first sought to predict the binary outcome of students participating in ethnic/racial student organizations. Variables were entered in blocks to examine student background characteristics, as well as institutional characteristics, and key student involvement and interactions. After predicting the characteristics of Latina/o college student participation in ethnic/racial student organizations, a subsequent multivariate regression analysis considered student participation in ethnic/racial student organizations as well as other student and institutional variables on three dependent variables: civic awareness, importance of becoming a community leader, and leadership development (change in leadership ability self-ratings). As institutions look to develop the next generation of Latina/o leaders, it is important to see how these critical college years can facilitate important social and civic outcomes for one of the nation's largest and fastest growing minority groups in the United States (Steplar and Brown, 2014).

### **Descriptive Statistics**

The sample consisted of 2,164 Latina/o college students, of which 1,038, or 48% reported participating in an ethnic/racial student organizations. The sample consisted of 1,103 Mexican/Chicano students (referent group), 280 Puerto Rican students, and 900 students marked "Other Latino" when asked their race/ethnicity. Participants included 1,479, or 68.3% female Latina college students. Over two-thirds (67.3%) of the Latina/os in the sample gave themselves an above average self-rating in their leadership ability. Slightly less than one-third (31.5%), indicated English was not their native language. Roughly, one-quarter (24.5) reported working full-time while attending college, and 70% reported having had a roommate of a different race/ethnicity. The sample, also reported a strong sense of belonging to their college campuses,

with 82.1% reporting they agree, and 17.3% indicating they did not feel a strong sense of belonging to their campus community.

### **Characteristics of Latina/o Students in Ethnic/Racial Student Organizations**

In comparing Latina/o college student background characteristics, four of 11 variables are statistically significant in predicting the likelihood of participation in ethnic/racial student organizations: Native English Speaking Latina/o college students, parent's income, self-rating of cooperativeness, and students who participated in organized demonstrations. Controlling for Institutional Characteristics, Involvement and Interactions, six of the 12 key variables are significant in predicting Latina/o student participation in ethnic/racial student organizations, including: hours per week working (for pay), institutional selectivity, positive cross racial interactions, negative cross racial interactions, reporting they attended a racial/cultural workshop, and participating in political demonstrations during college. These results are discussed below and are shown in Table 4.1.

#### **Student Background Characteristics and Pre-Dispositions**

**Native English Speaking Latina/o College Students and Family Income.** The Native English Speaker variable often is often used as a proxy for first-generation Latina/o students in the country. This study finds that Native English Speakers are nearly 45% less likely (-.449,  $p < .001$ ) than Non-Native English speakers to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations. This may indicate that such organizations offer a comfort level for use of Spanish on campus.

Latina/o college students' self-reported family income is a significant negative predictor (Log Odds= -.54,  $p < .01$ ) of participating in racial/ethnic student organizations. Meaning, students with higher reported family income are less likely to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations.



Table 4.1. Logistic Regression Predicting Latina/ College Student Participation in Ethnic/Racial Student Organizations (N = 1882)

Variable Name	Log Odds	Sig.
<i>Background Characteristics</i>		
Puerto Rican (Mexican American)	-.116	.508
Other Latino (Mexican American)	.210	.067
Sex	.222	.064
Family Income	-.054**	.003
Native English Speaker	-.449***	.000
High School Participated in Organized Demonstrations	.237**	.003
High School Required Community Service for Graduation	.050	.659
Cooperativeness	.194*	.012
Drive to Achieve	.021	.798
Leadership Ability	.064	.367
Self-confidence (social)	-.090	.180
<i>Institution Characteristics Variables</i>		
Size (total enrollment)	-.071	.117
Selectivity	.003***	.000
Hispanic Serving Institution	-.253	.216
Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution	.039	.812
Live in Residence Halls	.273	.317
Live with Family	-.315	.292
Live in Fraternity or Sorority	-1 .041	.284
<i>College Experiences</i>		
Attended Racial/Cultural Awareness Workshop	1 .469***	.000
Participated in Political Demonstration	.469***	.000
Working for Pay (HPW)	-.044*	.032
<i>College Interactions</i>		
Positive Cross Racial Interactions	.034***	.000
Negative Cross Racial Interactions	.022**	.003
	Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.343

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

### **Cooperativeness and Participation in Organized Demonstrations in High School.**

Two other student background characteristics were considered and tested that are positively associated with the likelihood of predicting Latina/o student participation in ethnic/racial student organizations in college. First, students who described themselves as more cooperative are significant ( $p < .05$ ). That is, for every unit increase in students self-rating on the cooperativeness scale their odds of participating in ethnic/racial student organizations increased nearly 20% (log odds = .194). This means, that Latina/o college students who rated themselves as more cooperative in disposition compared to the average person their age are more likely to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations.

Also, Latina/o college students who reported participating in organized demonstrations in high school predicted participation in ethnic/racial student organizations in college. These Latina/o college students are nearly 24% more likely to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations (logs odds = .237,  $p < .01$ ). Other variables that were controlled for, along with student background characteristics, that are not statistically significant include: student's sex (male or female), predisposition to service (high school required community service for graduation), and self-concept measures (students self-rating on drive to achieve, leadership, and social self-confidence.) There are also, surprisingly, no significant differences between Latino ethnic groups in participation.

### **College Experience Variables and Participation in Ethnic/Racial Student Organizations**

Previous research had determined student background characteristics, not college environments, show stronger influence on extracurricular participation in college (Berk and Goebel (1987). Given this, it was expected that less institutional and involvement variables

would be as significant as the background characteristics that have been previously discussed. Yet, six of these measures were determined to be statically significant in predicting Latina/o college student participation in ethnic/racial student organizations. IPEDS data merged with College Senior student surveys allowed for the following measures to be tested: institutional size, institutional selectivity, institutional type (HSI, emerging HSI, and non-HSI), cross racial interactions, student residence, and participation in racial/cultural workshops and participation in political demonstrations during college. In all, 12 measures were tested in the model, and six yielded statistically significant results.

**Working for Pay (Hours Per Week).** After controlling for student background characteristics including family income, students' reported hours per week working for pay during college is a marginally significant predictor ( $p < .05$ ). Working students are somewhat less likely to participate in racial/ethnic student organizations, presumably due to time constraints. Latina/os who reported having to work more hours (for pay), are 4% less likely to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations than others who work fewer hours for each category on this scale. Given the rising costs of attendance, family socio-economic status and the effects of having to work for pay are discussed in the next chapter.

**Racial and Cultural Workshops and Political Demonstration Participation.** Amongst the strongest predictors of Latina/o college students participating in ethnic/racial student organizations is having attended a racial/cultural workshop (log odds = 1.469). That is, Latina/o students who reported attending a racial/cultural workshop are nearly 1.5 times more likely to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations ( $p < .001$ ). Given that a large number of racial and cultural workshops are hosted or organized by ethnic/racial student organizations, it makes sense that Latina/o students who attend these same workshops would be more likely to report

participating in these organizations in some capacity. Similarly, students who had participated in political demonstrations in college are also more likely ( $p < .001$ ) to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations (log odds = .469). Meaning, students who participated in political demonstrations in college were 47% more likely to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations.

**Cross Racial Interactions.** Examining results for campus climate measures, the study included measures of both positive cross-racial interactions and negative cross-racial interactions. The positive cross-racial interactions was a factor scale of eight variables. Taken together, the positive cross racial interactions factor had a strong alpha reliability ( $\alpha = 0.882$ ). (See Appendix B for all items and factors in the multivariate model).

Positive cross-racial interactions have a modest log odds (= .034) but a very strong positive relationship ( $p < .001$ ). Students who reported more positive cross-racial interactions subsequently increased their odds of participating in ethnic/racial student organizations. For every unit increase in reported positive cross-racial interactions, Latina/os were 3% more likely to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations.

The negative cross-racial interactions scale is a factor of three variables (had guarded interactions; had tense, somewhat hostile interactions; felt insulted or threatened because of your race/ethnicity.) Taken together, the negative cross racial interactions factor had an adequate alpha reliability ( $\alpha = 0.771$ , see Appendix C). Ironically, students who reported more negative cross-racial student interactions on campus also had a strong effect ( $p < .01$ ) and are 2% more likely to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations (log odds = .022). This suggests that both students with positive and negative relations with students outside their race/ethnicity gravitate toward and participate in racial/ethnic student organizations to promote cultural

awareness on campus, and also as safe spaces from hostile interactions. It is likely they also form alliances with several other racial student organizations, which increases their positive cross racial interactions.

**Institutional Selectivity.** In terms of type of college, institutional selectivity has a small (log odds = .003) but a strongly significant ( $p < .001$ ) relationship in predicting Latina/o participation in ethnic/racial student organizations. This was based on SAT/ACT scores among entering freshmen at the institution, so the effect is based on 100 score point differences between colleges in selectivity. That is, students at selective colleges are more likely to participate in these student organizations, presumably because their numbers are small and they form and come together to around issues related to race/ethnicity on campus. The study also controlled for additional institutional variables including, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and emerging Hispanic-Serving Institutions as well as institutional size, all of which are characteristics that are not statistically significant. Meaning, Latina/os at all types of colleges are likely to participate in these student organizations. Students' residence (residence halls, live with family, or live in fraternity or sorority) is also not statistically significant and did not predict student participation in ethnic and racial student organizations.

### **Predicting Latina/o Civic Awareness**

The civic awareness measure was a construct created by researchers at the Higher Education Research Institute, composed of three variables used to longitudinally study reported change in: Understanding of the problems facing your community, understanding of national issues, and understanding of global issues. Latina/o college students background characteristics and predispositions, institutional factors, college experience and activities were hypothesized to predict students' civic awareness. Although some of the independent variables in the model were

correlated, the collinearity VIF statistics were all lower than 1.906, which is the common cutoff criterion for deciding when a given independent variable displays “too much” multicollinearity. The VIF statistic suggests a multicollinearity problem does not exist. The significant findings are presented in the sections that follow and in Table 4.2, which shows the model changes as each category of predictors entered the equation.

### **Student Background Characteristics, Predispositions and Civic Awareness**

To assess the impact of college experiences, it is important to control for background characteristics and students’ predispositions at college entry. Several measures were used in this analysis and, with the exception of the pretests that differed by outcome, student background measures parallels controls used in previous and subsequent multivariate analyses.

**Discussing Politics.** The civic awareness factor measures students’ “understanding of the issues facing their community, nation and the world.” A direct pretest was not available on the Freshmen Survey (TFS) for the civic awareness outcome. Given the absence of a direct pretest to measure predispositions and predict changes during college on the dependent outcome, a proxy variable representing students having “discussed politics” in the past year in high school, was used as way to control for predispositions (Table 4.2). In the final model, this proxy (students reported having discussed politics in the past year in high school) is a significant predictor ( $p < .001$ ) of civic awareness measured in the senior year. In the first block, this proxy had captured nearly 7% of the variance, while the final model captured almost 19% of the variance in senior civic awareness ( $r^2 = .185$ ). In the end, however, for every unit of change in Latina/o students who reported having discussed politics in the past year in high school, resulted in .161 increase in Latina/o civic awareness during their senior year in college.

Once this measure is controlled, other background and college experience measures were significant predictors.

**Native English Speaking Latina/o College Students.** Of the student background characteristics tested in this model, native English speaking is the only student background and student predisposition measure that is significant. Often times, this variable is used as proxy to control for recent immigration, and non-native English speakers are often considered the first-generation in the country. Results show that native English speaking Latina/o college students are significantly less likely (- .064;  $p < .01$ ) than non-native English speaking to show civic awareness (in terms of an understanding of issues affecting their community, nation and the world). This is not surprising for recent immigrants who have experiences in other countries and rely on Spanish language media. However, none of the other background characteristics and predispositions were statistically significant in measuring Latina/o college students' understanding of the issues facing their community, nation and the world. This indicates there were no gender, SES, or ethnic differences among Latina/os on this outcome.

### **College Experience Variables and Civic Awareness**

**Hispanic Serving Institutions.** Results also indicate the nation's growing Hispanic Serving Institutions are having a significant positive effect (.086\*\*) on students' civic awareness ( $p < .01$ ), further highlighting the outcomes associated with Latina/o college students at Hispanic Serving Institutions (Cuellar, 2015; Núñez, Hurtado, & Calderón Galdeano, 2015). This means that Latina/o college students who attended Hispanic Serving Institutions reported having a better understanding of issues facing their community, the nation, and the world compared with students at Emerging HSIs or Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). The study also

controlled for institutional size and institutional selectivity, but none were found to have a statistically significant relationship.

**Positive Cross Racial Interactions.** Building on the Hispanic Serving Institution institutional findings, which are extremely diverse institutions, results show that students who reported more positive cross racial interactions on campus, also reported a higher civic awareness. For every unit of change in positive cross-racial interactions, students experienced a .120 increase ( $p < .001$ ) in their civic awareness score by their senior year of college. The study also controlled for negative cross racial interactions, but such a relationship is not significant. These findings highlight the positive effects of education with a diverse student body and quality interactions that result in better informed and concerned citizens.

**Social Agency.** The next block tested in the model controlled for college activities and self-measures. Of these, students who value political and social involvement as a personal goal (or social agency) in their senior year, reported a significant positive relationship on students' civic awareness (CIRP Construct Technical Report, 2011). For every unit of change in value of social agency, that is, political and social involvement as a personal goal, students reported a .229 in their civic awareness in their senior year ( $P < .001$ ). Students who also reported a higher leadership self-rating compared to the average person their age in their senior year, reported a moderate significance ( $p < .01$ ). That is, students who reported a higher leadership self-rating also reported a better understanding of the issues facing their community, nation, and the world. In this case, for every unit of change in their self-reported leadership ability, Latina/o college students experienced a .061 increase in civic awareness in their senior year.

**Attending Cultural/Racial Awareness Workshops.** Lastly, Latina/o college students who attended a cultural/racial awareness workshop, also has a statistically significant



Table 4.2 Latina/o College Student Civic Awareness (N = 1894)

Variable Name	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5
<i>Pretest (Proxy)</i>					
Discussed Politics in the Past Year (TFS)	.267***	.282***	.243***	.240***	.161***
<i>Student Background Characteristics and Predispositions</i>					
Puerto Rican (Mexican American)		-.038	-.033	-.032	-.029
Other Latina/o (Mexican American)		.016	-.018	-.019	-.013
Sex		.061	.050*	.047*	.022
Family Income		.021	.024	.026	.025
Native English Speaker		-.098***	-.088***	-.085***	-.064**
High School Participated in Organized Demonstrations		.055*	.038	.035	-.009
High School Required Community Service for Graduation		.016	.012	.012	.011
<i>Institution Characteristic Variables</i>					
Size (total enrollment)			.030	.032	.036
Selectivity			.036	.029	.038
Hispanic Serving Institution			.091**	.093***	.086**
Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution			.020	.021	.010
<i>College Experiences</i>					
Participated in Ethnic/Racial Student Organizations				.034	-.024
Attended a Racial/Cultural Awareness Workshop					.053*
Participated in Political Demonstration					.040
Worked on a local, state, or national political campaign					-.026
Voted in Student Election					.023
Performed Volunteer Work					-.004

Variable Name	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5	
Demonstrated for/against work					.002	
Working for Pay (HPW)					.020	
<i>College Interactions</i>						
Positive Cross Racial Interactions					.120***	
Negative Cross Racial Interactions					-.031	
	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	.072	.091	.125	.126	.185
	<i>Change in R<sup>2</sup></i>	.072***	.020***	.034***	.001	.059***
	<i>F</i>	145.698	5.128	12.089	2.147	17.043

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

relationship ( $p < .05$ ) with Latina/o college student civic awareness. That is, students who reported attending a cultural/racial awareness workshop also reported a better understanding of the issues facing their community, nation, and the world. Student who reported having attended a cultural/racial awareness workshop reported .053 change in civic awareness.

In sum, interactions with diversity activities or in diverse colleges have an impact on Latina/os students understanding of their community, nation and the world. This becomes increasingly important in the rapidly changing world today where students must develop values skills and knowledge to participate in a pluralistic democracy.

### **Predicting the Importance of Becoming a Community Leader**

The next dependent variable measured change in the importance of becoming a community leader amongst Latina/o college students. Students were asked to respond “not important, somewhat important, very important, or essential.” Roughly one in five (18.5%) of the Latina/os in the sample reported that becoming a community leader was not important, whereas 16.4% reported that becoming a community leader was essential. One-third (33.5%) of the Latina/os in our sample reported it was somewhat important goal, and 30.7% indicated it was a very important goal. Regression analysis was used to test for student background characteristics and predispositions, institutional factors, and college environments and activities to predict the Latina/o college student change in importance of becoming a community leader. Not surprisingly, the direct pretest at college entry is amongst the strongest predictors with a standardized beta coefficient of .266 ( $p < .001$ ). It explains nearly 18% of the variance alone, or half of the total model of predictors explaining nearly 36% of the variance. The significant variables are discussed in steps as they were forced entered into the models (Table 4.4). Given the dependent variable of student reported goal of becoming a community leader with the

independent variables, six variables in the model were determined to be correlated but the collinearity VIF statistics were all lower than 1.961. Since this is less than 4.0, it suggests there is not a multicollinearity problem.

### **Student Background Characteristics, Predispositions and the Importance of Becoming a Community Leader**

**Native English Speaking Latina/o College Students.** Of the student background characteristics and predispositions that were tested in the analysis, only English Native Language is negatively associated with changes in students' importance placed on becoming a community leader ( $p < .01$ ). This suggests that native English speaking Latina/o college students are less likely to report this as an important goal compared with non-native English speakers. This variable entered significant in the first step, and remained significant and negatively associated with the dependent measure, although losing some of its predictive influence as other variables entered the regression. Surprisingly, none of the other background characteristics and predispositions (sex, family SES, participated in organized demonstrations, high school service requirement, and working for pay) are significantly related to this outcome.

### **College Experiences Variables and Students' Importance of Becoming a Community Leader**

**Negative Cross-Racial Interactions.** Both positive cross-racial interactions and negative cross racial interactions were tested along with other college experiences. Negative cross-racial interactions is the only institutional variable to be associated ( $p < .001$ ) with the change in reported goal of becoming a community leader amongst Latina/o college students. That is, for every unit change in negative cross-racial interactions, Latina/o college students experienced a .071 unit change in the goal of becoming a community leader. You would expect that negative

cross racial interactions to have a negative effect or association on student outcomes, but in this instance, students reporting negative cross-racial interactions serves as a motivating factor in becoming a community leader. Positive cross-racial interactions also entered as a strong significant predictor at first but lost statistical significance after the variables in the last block were entered in the model. It maintains a positive association while it remained statistically significant in the models at step 3 and step 4 (for example). This may indicate an indirect effect as it shares variance with other measures (participation in cultural/racial workshops and leadership) in model.

**Participating in Ethnic/Racial Student Organizations.** After testing for characteristics of students who participate in ethnic/racial student organizations, I expected it to have a positive association on each of the dependent variables for Latina/o College Students. In the end, it proved to be marginally significant ( $p < .05$ ) on predicting the importance of becoming a community leader. Latina/o college students who reported participating in ethnic/racial student organizations were also more likely to have a positive change in the goal of becoming a community leader. Latina/os who reported also participating in ethnic/racial student organizations have a .046 positive change in their goal of becoming a community leader. In other words, Latina/o college student engagement in cultural organizations can have a positive effect on civic outcomes, including aspirations of becoming a community leader.

**Attended a cultural/racial workshop.** Latina/o college students who reported attending a cultural/racial workshop during college have significant change in their goal of becoming a community leader (.077;  $p < .001$ ). Given student and university programming on American colleges and universities, administrators (and student fee officials) should be aware that cultural/racial workshops can have positive association with changes in student aspirations to

Table 4.3 Latina/o College Student Importance of Becoming a Community Leader (N = 1826)

Variable Name	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5
<i>Pretest</i>					
Importance of Becoming a Community Leader (TFS)	.421***	.403***	.373***	.365***	.266***
<i>Student Background Characteristics and Predispositions</i>					
Puerto Rican (Mexican American)		-.016	-.023	-.021	-.015
Other Latino (Mexican American)		.006	.002	-.002	.005
Sex		.015	.018	.008	.028
Family Income		.015	.017	.028	-.004
Native English Speaker		-.054*	-.044	-.034	-.056**
High School Participated in Organized Demonstration in High School		.081***	.066**	.056**	.017
High School Required Community Service for Graduation		.000	-.009	-.011	-.006
<i>Institution Characteristic Variables</i>					
Size (total enrollment)			-.015	-.009	.002
Selectivity			.027	.000	.010
Hispanic Serving Institution			.015	.022	.031
Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution			.036	.037	.031
<i>College Experiences</i>					
Participated in Racial/Ethnic Student Organizations				.130***	.046*
Attended a Racial/Cultural Awareness Workshop					.077***
Participated in political demonstrations					.065*
Worked on Local/State/National Elections					.013
Voted in Student Elections					.037
Performed Volunteer Work					.131***
Demonstrated for/against a war					.038
Discussed Politics					.033
Leadership Ability (self-rating)					.267***

Variable Name	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5	
Working for Pay (HPW)					-.005	
<i>College Interactions</i>						
Positive Cross Racial Interactions					.028	
Negative Cross Racial Interactions					.071***	
	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	.177	.187	.221	.235	.357
	<i>Change in R<sup>2</sup></i>	.177***	.010***	.034	.014***	.122***
	<i>F</i>	391.874***	2.861***	13.124	33.854***	42.791***

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

become a community leader.

**Volunteer Work.** Latina/o college students who reported having performed volunteer work also has a strong association with students reported change in their goal of becoming a community leader ( $p < .001$ ). Latina/o students who reported having done volunteer work, increase by a .131 change in their importance of becoming a community leader. If college and universities want to do more to produce the next generation of community leaders, they can also look to expand or formalize volunteer work or opportunities for its students as part of the college curriculum.

**Participation in political demonstrations.** Latina/o college students who participated in political demonstrations are also determined to be associated with changes in their goal of becoming a community leader (marginally significant at  $p < .05$ ). Latina/o students who reported participating in political demonstrations, experience a .065 change in the importance they place on becoming a community leader. Very often, community leadership is associated with activism and these results confirm that aspect of student's activities and values.

**Self-Reported Leadership Ability.** Perhaps the most striking – and strongest – variable associated with student values to become a community leader is their assessment of their leadership ability. Not only was it strongly associated ( $p < .001$ ), but leadership ability self-ratings also shared an equal relationship (standardized beta coefficient = .267) with the direct pretest measure (Importance of Becoming a Community Leader (TFS) = .266). Surprisingly, having worked on local/state/national election, voting in student election, discussed politics, or having demonstrated for/against war did not yield any significance in student values of becoming a community leader.



## Summary

Together, the variables in the model for predicting Latina/o college student aspirations of becoming a community leader accounted for over one-third of the variance ( $R^2 = .357$ ). After controlling for the direct pretest, native English speaking Latina/o college students are less likely to believe that it is important to become a community leader. Moreover, negative cross-racial interactions and students who reported participating in ethnic/racial student organizations both have a significant positive association with students reported change in values of becoming a community leader. Other strong associations on Latina/o student values to become a community leader include students who report having attended a cultural/racial workshop, those who report having performed volunteer work, participated in political demonstrations, and those who reported higher self-ratings of their leadership ability compared to others of their same age.

### **Predicting Latina/o College Student Leadership Development**

The last dependent outcome tested predictors of Latina/o college student leadership development, or changes in leadership ability (self-ratings) in college. After controlling for Latina/o student background characteristics and predispositions, institutional factors, and college environments, activities and other college measures, we see *how* the college experience effects students' reported leadership ability compared with the average person their age. Variables were forced entered in blocks, testing new measures and elements of the campus climate to determine the effect of predictors on changes of self-rated ability since the freshmen year. The college environments and activities were considerably stronger than background characteristics in the model, with the exception of the pretest and gender. This indicates that although institutional factors share predictive power in student's leadership development, the college environments and

activities do not change Latinas lower self-rated leadership ability relative to men. The significance and implications of this is discussed in the next chapter.

### **Student Background, Predispositions and Self-Rated Leadership Ability**

Only two measures are predictors of change in students' leadership development. The leadership ability pretest in the freshmen year predicted 25% of the variance, more than half of the variance from all predictors in the model (33%). Once this is controlled along with all other measures, women are less likely than males to show improvement in their leadership ability self-ratings by the senior year in college ( $\text{sex} = -.137, p < .001$ ). No other measures were significant in the final step of the equation.

### **College Experiences and Self-Rated Leadership Ability**

**Positive Cross Racial Interactions.** Of the institutional factors that were considered (institutional size, institutional selectivity, Hispanic and emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions, and negative cross racial interactions,) only positive cross-racial interactions proves to be strongly associated with Latina/o college student changes in self-reported leadership ability. For every unit of change in reported positive cross racial interactions with students from a racial/ethnic group other than their own, students experience a .097 increase in their reported leadership ability by their senior year. This would suggest that a more positive campus climate has a positive effect on Latina/o college student development.

**Social Agency.** Of the college measures considered, students with a stronger social agency score, proves to have the strongest positive association in this block of measures on Latina/o college student leadership ability self-rating. The social agency construct is a survey measure that considers the extent to which students value political and social involvement as a personal goal. The factor is made up of the following measures: student goals of keeping up to

date with political affairs, participating in a community action program, influencing social values, becoming a community leader, helping others who are in difficulty, and helping to promote racial understanding. For every unit of change in student social agency score, Latina/o college students were more likely to report a higher leadership ability in their senior year. That is, for every unit in social agency score reported, Latina/os experienced a .150 gain in their reported leadership ability ( $p < .001$ ).

**Voting in a Student Election.** Latina/o college students who reported voting in student elections, have significantly higher self-rated leadership ability by their senior year ( $p < .001$ ) compared to the average person their age. That is, students who report voting in student election also indicated a .088-unit change in their reported leadership ability. Although other civic-oriented measures were considered in this block, including students reporting having worked on local/state/national election, and having discussed politics, these measures were not found to be statistically significant. This suggests student elections are shown to affect social and civic outcomes in college, including Latina/o college student leadership development.

**Performing Volunteer Work.** Building on the understanding of variables associated with Latina/o college student leadership development, students who reported also performing volunteer work, are associated with change in their self-reported leadership ability (.080;  $p < .001$ ). In fact, students who reported engaging in volunteer work in the past year, are more likely to report a higher leadership ability self-rating. Since the question only asked students to consider volunteer engagement in the past year, it is hard to determine if earlier service (not in their junior year) or if the question had asked for students to consider all service while in college would have resulted in an even stronger relationship with self-ratings.

**Attended a Cultural/Racial Awareness Workshop.** The last variable showing a modest association with Latina/o college students leadership ability, is having attended a cultural/racial awareness workshop while in college (.050;  $p < .05$ ). Latina/o college students who reported attending a cultural/racial awareness workshop increase in their self-reported leadership ability by their senior year.

## **Summary**

Revisiting the Latina/o college student leadership ability (Treviño, 1992) with a new cohort of students allows us to see how students continue to evolve and still experience college differently. Together, the variables in the model for predicting Latina/o college student leadership development accounted for over one-third of the variance ( $R^2 = .335$ ). The study reaffirms certain results – and proves new relationships and associations. Women (Latina's) report lower self-rating of their leadership ability than men when comparing themselves to the average person their age. This has implications for targeted leadership activities for Latinas. The study suggests that a more inclusive and diverse campus climate that facilitates positive cross-racial interactions is also positively associated with Latina/os leadership ability self-rating in their senior year of college. Not surprising, Latina/o students who demonstrate a higher social agency score are also more likely to have high leadership ability self-ratings. Similarly, Latina/o students who voted in student elections, performed volunteer work, and attended a cultural/racial awareness workshop also are significantly more likely to have higher self-ratings. Surprisingly, family socio-economic status or native English speaking Latina/o college students do not appear to be significant factors in predicting Latina/o leadership ability. Lastly, contrary to my hypothesis, Latina/os college student participating in racial/ethnic student organizations do not

Table 4.4 Latina/o College Student Leadership Development (N = 1889)

Variable Name	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5
<i>Pretest</i>					
Leadership Ability (TFS)	.500***	.481***	.463***	.462***	.423***
<i>Student Background Characteristics and Predispositions</i>					
Puerto Rican (Mexican American)		.009	.001	.002	.004
Other Latino (Mexican American)		.013	.006	.005	.008
Sex		-.099***	-.110***	-.112***	-.137***
Family Income		.033	.037	.040	.039
Native English Speaker		.009	.013	.016	.021
High School Participated in Organized Demonstration		.061**	.047*	.044*	.029
High School Required Community Service for Graduation		.028	.021	.020	.028
<i>Institution Characteristic Variables</i>					
Size (total enrollment)			-.035	-.033	-.026
Selectivity			-.025	-.032	-.049
Hispanic Serving Institution			-.005	-.003	-.015
Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution			.016	.016	.006
<i>College Experiences</i>					
Participated in Racial/Ethnic Student Organizations				.036	-.029
Attended a Racial/Cultural Awareness Workshop					.050*
Participated in Political Demonstration					-.030
Worked on Local/State/National Campaign					.015
Voted in Student Election					.088***
Performed Volunteer Work					.080***
Demonstrated for/against war					-.038
Discussed Politics					.021
Social Agency					.150***

Variable Name		Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5
<i>College Interactions</i>						
Positive Cross Racial Interactions						.097***
Negative Cross Racial Interactions						-.021
	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.250	.265	.287	.288	.335
	<i>Change in R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.250***	.015***	.022***	.001	.047***
	<i>F</i>	629.057***	4.768***	9.697***	2.903	16.484***

\**p*<.05, \*\**p*<.01, \*\*\**p*<.001

have higher self-rated leadership ability compared to the average person their age by their senior year of college. The implications of these findings are discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study sought to better understand the experiences in U.S. colleges and universities that prepare Latina/o college graduates to participate successfully in American democracy by developing their civic awareness and preparing them for leadership roles in communities and across industries. More specifically, this study examined three student outcomes for four-year institutions of higher education that are developing Latina/o leaders (*vis-à-vis* self-rated leadership ability), facilitating their civic awareness, and developing a commitment to become community leaders. The study also examines how colleges and universities are preparing Latina/os to actively participate in a growing diverse democracy by developing their civic awareness defined as their understanding of the issues facing their local community, nation and the world; and developing values for becoming community leaders.

Hispanics remain the largest minority group in the United States making up 17 percent of the nation's population and are expected to represent 70 percent of the U.S. population growth between 2015 and 2060 (Colby and Ortman, 2015.) In fact, by 2060, Latina/os are projected to account for nearly a third of the U.S. workforce (Toossi, 2016). Because of this, it is important to examine how colleges and universities can play a bigger role in preparing the nation's growing Latina/o population to assume positions of leadership across sectors, and in communities.

As first-and-subsequent-generations of Latina/os in the United States continue to grow, we can expect larger numbers of Latina/os enrolling in higher education across the U.S. Dey and Hurtado (2005) argued that "changes in the composition and nature of American undergraduates and a recognition of the interconnections between students, institutions, and society force us to reconceptualize our thinking about college students" (p. 336). In fact, given the increase of



Latina/os, including in states with historically few Latina/os such as Arkansas, North Carolina, Nebraska, Idaho, and Washington (Lopez, 2011), it is an imperative for states and U.S. higher education to continue to focus on college completion for Latina/os as an economic driver, but also expand the conversation beyond workforce development to consider broader social and civic outcomes of higher education. With 26.7 million eligible Latino voters in the U.S., Latina/o involvement in civic processes have the capacity today to turn elections (Krogstad and Lopez, 2017), and the students in this longitudinal study are now in their early careers. This study explores what happened to them during four years in college regarding their growth in civic awareness and leadership capacity.

### **Advances in Approach and Analysis**

Qualitative studies have highlighted the benefits for Latina/os and other minority students associated with participating in ethnic and racial student organizations on American colleges and universities (Dunkel and Schus, 1998; Guiffirda, 2003; Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel, 1991.) Using multiple regression, Treviño (1992) first sought to examine the variables that predict the outcomes of leadership and retention of Chicano and African American college students (p. 66). One of the objectives of his analysis was to determine (after controlling for initial self-view on leadership ability) the contribution of participation in ethnic/racial student organizations to students' self-rated leadership ability after four years of college (Treviño, 1992). The present study, similarly looked to predict participation in ethnic/racial student organizations. Using logistic regression, this study identified the characteristics of new measures in predicting participation in these same type of student organizations, but now also including more details about their diverse environments and students' cross racial interactions. The use of logistic regression on the binary outcome predicting Latina/o participation in ethnic/racial student

organizations, provided the likelihood, via odds ratios, of particular student background characteristics, institutional variables, and college environments that predict Latina/o student participation in these types of student organizations.

Additionally, this study revisited the same Latina/o student leadership development outcome with a new cohort of Latina/o college students. It had been over two decades since Treviño (1992) first looked at how colleges affected student leadership ability. Since then, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, our institutions have become more diverse, larger numbers of Latina/o students have enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities, and available data has allowed for more critical examination of institutional factors and experiences that affect student outcomes. Research has examined how more diverse college environments affect students on campus. For example, Chang (1999) found that a racially diverse student body has a positive effect on educational outcomes through its effects on diversity-oriented student activities and experiences.

Following Nora, Barlow, and Crisp's (2005) Student/Institution Engagement Theoretical Framework and relying on multivariate regression analysis, this study considered new variables and factors, including elements of campus climate, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and diverse college activities and environments such as attending cultural and racial workshops, volunteer work, and participating in political demonstrations to determine their effect (if any) on the study's three outcomes: civic awareness, importance of becoming a community leader, and student's leadership ability.

### **Significant Contributions of the Study**

This study begins to fill research gaps on the outcomes of Latina/os in college. It adds to the higher education literature on ethnic and racial student organizations and Latina/os who

participate in them by looking at a national sample of Latina/os; whereas, a vast majority of earlier studies employed qualitative analysis or were single institutional studies. Previous studies had much smaller sample sizes, and very few HSIs (Treviño, 1992), while this study was able to identify heterogeneity among Latina/o college students attending a variety of four-year colleges. This study revisits leadership development with a new generation of students. It has been almost 25 years since the last major multi-institutional study of student participation in these organizations (Treviño, 1992), and much has changed in those decades as American college and universities have become more diverse. Furthermore, the results add to the growing literature on the outcomes of institutions that are becoming Hispanic-serving.

The literature has identified ethnic/racial student organizations as “safe spaces” for students (Guiffrida, 2003; Montelongo, 2003; Delgado-Romero and Hernandez, 2002; Astin, Trevino, & Wingard, 1991), and this study began to identify the characteristics of Latina/o students who participate in them. Surprisingly, both positive cross-racial interactions and negative cross-racial interactions had strong effects on the likelihood of participating in ethnic/racial student organizations. This indicates that students who experience positive relations and more negative interactions with diverse students (students outside of their race) tend to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations. Furthermore, this study finds that participation in ethnic/racial student organizations play a significant role in developing Latina/os value of becoming a community leader. Given the critical college years, the values and commitments that are developed during this stage in life makes this finding significant.

### **Research Design and Civic Outcomes**

This two-phase study, first explored the characteristics of students who participated in ethnic/racial student organizations examining specific student and institutional characteristics,

and the college environments and activities that predict participation in these types of student organizations on college and university campuses. The binary nature of students indicating participation in ethnic/racial student organizations (yes or no) made logistic regression the most appropriate statistical analysis. The second part of the study employed multivariate regression analysis to examine student college experiences and diverse institutional variables that were associated with Latina/o student civic awareness, the importance of becoming a community leader, and their leadership development.

### **Guiding Literature and Frameworks**

A number of perspectives informed the frameworks guiding this study. Both Astin's Involvement Theory (1984, 1999) and Nora, Barlow, and Crisp's (2005) Student/Institution Engagement Theoretical Framework that is widely considered as more inclusive than earlier student integration, retention, and engagement frameworks. Whereas Astin intended for his theory to be race-neutral, critics considered it devoid of race. However, considered along with the Nora et al. framework, places student engagement (or involvement) with student's time at the center and applicable toward more diverse student populations, including factors that may influence minority, low-income, and non-traditional students based on the empirical research focused on these student communities.

### **Discussion of Findings**

**Research Question 1.** The first research question in the study was: "*What are the characteristics of Latina/o college students who participated in ethnic/racial student organizations?*" It was hypothesized that key characteristics of Latina/o college students who participated in ethnic/racial student organizations including: student demographic characteristics,

self-ratings, values and attitudes, as well as reported high school activities, and location of residence while in college.

The findings in Chapter 4 began to identify a profile of key characteristics of students that seek out and participate in ethnic/racial student organizations. In fact, of the 11 background characteristics that were considered, both (higher) family income and native English speaking students were less likely to participate in these types of student organizations. Similarly, two other student background characteristics were considered and tested that are positively associated with the likelihood of predicting Latina/o student participation in ethnic/racial student organizations in college: students who described themselves as being cooperative and who reported participating in organized demonstrations in high school were more likely to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations in college.

Noteworthy, when Treviño first looked at participation in ethnic/racial student organizations (1992), family income was not significant, and now we see it as both significant and negatively associated. Similarly, the more hours per week a student reported working (for pay) was also significant and negatively associated with participation in these organizations. It is probable that high-income and working students neglect to become involved for very different reasons: the first may be a detachment from cultural and political issues among high SES Latina/os, whereas the second group may lack the time because of the need to work pay for college and support the family. Given the increasing cost associated with college attendance this finding has the potential to shape institutional commitments for the engagement of growing numbers of Latina/o students, and is further discussed in the implications section that follows.

Also of interest were the consideration of more diverse institutional factors, campus climate measures, and diverse student interactions and activities. Of 12 measures that were

considered, six were found to be significant: institutional selectivity, positive cross-racial interactions, negative cross-racial interactions, attending racial/cultural workshop, participated in political demonstration, and hours per week working (for pay). Three of the measures considered race or were race-related interactions. These findings suggest race-related interactions and cultural awareness workshops have significant effects on participation in racial/ethnic student organizations.

Institutional selectivity was not shown to be significant on the earlier cohort in Treviño's study (1992), but was found to be positive and significant now. It may well be that far fewer students attended selective institutions in the late 1980s compared to today, and with greater numbers, they are forming these Latina/o organizations to reduce their isolation and create greater awareness on elite campuses. Finally, earlier research found that student place of residence was significant in relation to participating in student organizations (Astin, 1973; Chickering, 1978), however, after controlling for student living in the residence halls, with family, or in a fraternity or a sorority the present study did not find student place of residence to be significant in predicting participation.

**Research Question 2.** The second research question this study aimed to address was: *“After controlling for background characteristics, predispositions, and college environments, what is the effect, if any, of institutional factors, college experiences and activities, including participating in racial/ethnic student organizations, amongst Latino college students on (1) changes in leadership; (2) civic awareness, and (3) change in importance of becoming a community leader.”* Based on previous research it was hypothesized that participating in both student organizations and ethnic/racial student organizations would have a positive effect on leadership amongst Latina/o college students (Astin, 1999; Trevino, 1992; Astin, 1993; Hillison,

1984; Montenegro, 2003.) However, contrary to initial hypotheses (Chapter 3) the present study found that participating in ethnic/racial student organizations was not significant in predicting Latina/o student leadership development and students' self-rated leadership ability. Participation in ethnic/racial student organizations was also not amongst the variables shown to be a significant when examining civic awareness outcomes.

It was also hypothesized that student involvement in ethnic/racial student organizations yields a positive change on civic commitments in terms of awareness and the importance of becoming community leaders. That is, I hypothesized that it was greater amongst those Latina/o students who participate and are members of ethnic/racial student organizations. Although involvement in ethnic/racial student organization was not significant in facilitating student civic awareness, it was shown to be associated with developing a value on the importance of becoming a community leader. Students may be developing new skills in these organizations that will allow them to confidently fulfill their goal of becoming a community leader. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that participation in ethnic/racial student organizations would have a net effect across outcomes. That was not the case. Looking at the measures that were significant, it may be that cross-racial interactions have more of an effect on these outcomes.

### **Additional Observations about the Results**

#### **Background characteristics**

**Native English Speaking Latina/o College Students.** Of all the background characteristics, native English speaking Latina/o students were less likely to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations. Native English speaking Latina/os, was also less likely to show change in civic awareness, which was measured as the self-rating in understanding of issues affecting their community, nation and the world; and also, least likely to develop a

commitment of becoming a community leader. This is an area to further research. This suggests English native speaking students are less engaged with civic issues which is concerning because they may have the skills to serve their communities as a bridge for Latina/os who are new to the country. Non-native English speaking Latina/o college students may care more about the political and civic environment because they are often considered the first-generation in the country. Staying aware is important because they may have more to lose with changing policies, and recent immigrants may also be more committed to a belief in the American Dream. With a growing focus on the student success of first-generation and underrepresented minority college students, it is important to consider the college environments and activities that facilitate positive interactions and associations with student outcomes for these growing student populations.

**Sex.** Not surprisingly Latinas (females) were less likely than male (Latino) to show gains in their leadership ability self-ratings by the senior year in college. With women representing a growing percentage of the Latina/o college student population, this is troubling. The Latino literature on leadership calls attention to what researchers call the “triple oppression” Latinas face – racism, sexism, and cultural traditions that encourage passivity, fatalism, and in some cases submissiveness (Montoya, Hardy-Fanta, and Garcia, 2000). This reaffirms the importance to which institutions, including colleges and universities, should continue to prioritize leadership development opportunities for women on college campuses. Although, some would argue that the mere fact that women enroll and participate in higher education in larger numbers than men mean that we have reached parity, it reminds us that environments at U.S. colleges and universities continue to affect women differently, including Latinas.



## **Institutional Variables**

**Hispanic Serving Institutions.** Interestingly, Latina/o college students at Hispanic Serving Institutions reported having a better understanding of issues facing their community, the nation, and the world compared (civic awareness) than students at Emerging HSIs or Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). With Hispanic Serving Institutions enrolling 62% of all undergraduates and over 1.75 million Latina/o undergraduates in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016), the findings herein are significant for the 435 institutions that are considered Hispanic Serving Institutions (Excelencia in Education, 2015). As such, HSI's have an important role to play in the civic development of a growing number of U.S. college graduates. Policy and research implications are discussed in that section of this chapter.

**Cross-Racial Interactions.** Scholars had previously examined the educational relevance of cross-racial interaction and found they have a positive effect on students' intellectual, social, and civic development (Chang, Astin, Kim, 2004; Bowman, 2011). This study confirms that positive and negative cross racial interactions predict Latina/o student participation in ethnic/racial student organizations. Moreover, positive cross-racial interactions are also significant with Latina/o student civic awareness and self-reported leadership ability. Surprisingly, negative cross-racial interactions appear to have a positive effect on student reporting the goal of becoming a community leader—a silver-lining to the experiences that suggests how adversity sometimes serves as motivation to assume a position to promote change.

## **College Activities**

**Attended Cultural/Racial Awareness Workshops.** Of all the college activities tested, attending cultural/racial workshops was significant in predicting participation in ethnic/racial student organizations and three other outcomes. In fact, Latina/o students who reported

attending cultural/racial workshops were nearly 1.5 times more likely to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations. Earlier research found that students with more experiences with diversity and positive interactions with diverse peers, are more likely to score higher on academic self-confidence, social agency, and critical thinking disposition; and noted that diversity experiences may work together to foster development of certain aspects of self (Nelson Laird, 2004). The present study found that diversity experiences in the form of cultural/racial workshops were significant in developing Latina/o student civic awareness, and in reporting that becoming a community leader was an important goal. Attending racial/cultural awareness workshops also significantly predicting self-rated leadership ability. It may well be that Latina/o students not only attend but also help to organize such activities to promote awareness on campuses.

Furthermore, given the growing reports of racial incidents on college campuses, this is important for student organizations, academic and student affairs departments, and campus leaders to consider with campus programming, or even in determining funding and resource allocations. Especially in response to incidents of racial conflict, campuses may foster understanding through face-to-face interactions to sustained dialogue. A wide range of outcomes have been documented related to regular attendance in dialogue that promote cultural awareness and understanding of privilege and oppression (Gurin, Nagda & Zuniga, 2013).

**Social Agency.** This construct measures the extent to which students value political and social involvement as a personal goal, and found to be positively associated with civic awareness and self-rated leadership ability. The social agency measure consists of a factor of six variables (see Appendix C), one of which is students reported goal of becoming a community leader; thus, the factor was omitted from predicting the (importance of becoming a community leader)

outcome model. With empirical data suggesting social agency's strong positive effect on facilitating Latina/o student civic awareness and leadership development, it is becoming of institutions to continue to find new ways to engage students and develop social agency for the values that are embedded in this measure including the goals: keeping up to date with political affairs, participating in community actions program, influencing social values, becoming a community leader, helping others who are in need and helping to promote racial understanding which reflect the hallmarks of Putnam's (2000) engaged citizenry concepts. He argued that researchers across fields (including education) have discovered that successful outcomes are more likely in civically engaged communities. As such, and by extension, U.S. colleges and universities have an important role to play in preparing students to participate in civically engaged communities – developing their civic awareness, civic orientations and commitments.

**Performed Volunteer Work.** Further building on the idea of developing an engaged citizenry, students who reported performing volunteer work was significant in the reported goal of becoming a community leader and student leadership development (changes in self-reported leadership ability compared to average person their age). With a growing interest in public and community service at U.S. colleges and universities, campus leaders can look to these outcomes as supporting factors in expanding or formalizing structured volunteer opportunities on campus.

**Participated in Political Demonstrations.** Data suggests that colleges and universities across the U.S. have experienced an increase in student activism as students protested rising college costs and hostile racial climates on their campuses (Eagan, Stolzeberg, Bates, Aragon, Suchard, Rios-Aguilar, 2015). In fact, 8.5 percent of first-year college students said they have a “very good chance” of participating in student protests while in college represents the highest mark in the survey's history and is an increase of 2.9 percentage points over the 2014 survey

(Eagan et al. 2015). Given this, the findings of this study with Latina/o college students in 2008, suggests that participating in political demonstrations is associated with the goal of becoming a community leader. With data suggesting that student activism seems to be experiencing a revival at U.S. colleges and universities, students that get engaged in demonstrations may be developing their skills for community leadership.

With the AAC&U's (2012) call for colleges and universities to do more to prepare all college graduates to participate successfully in our democracy, participation in political demonstrations has a positive effect in developing Latina/o student goal commitment to becoming a community leader. In fact, this finding shows further promise given students' interest in community engagement, now with 39.8 percent of incoming freshmen indicate that they want to become community leaders - the highest ever reported for those survey questions (Eagan et al., 2015).

**Voting in Student Elections.** With college serving as a critical time when students develop their values, beliefs, and commitments, it is important to consider the significance that voting in student elections has on Latina/os leadership development. Hurtado (2007) previously argued that college impact research assumes that institutions shape the development of individuals (their values, skills, and knowledge) in preparation for work and leadership in society. Given that in any year, more than 800,000 Hispanics turn 18 and reach voting age, it is important to note that millennials make up almost half (44%) of the Hispanic electorate in 2016 (Krogstad and Lopez, 2017). Encouraging Latina/o students to vote in student elections not only supports leadership development but also their civic and democratic outcomes.

## **Implications for Future Research, Policy, and Practice**

Taken together, the findings of this study are significant and important. It followed a cohort of Latina/o college students and identified significant predictors that facilitate Latina/o students' civic awareness, goal of becoming a community leader, and their leadership development. As discussed in Chapter 1, the heart of a vibrant democracy is educated, engaged citizens who are able to make wise and responsible choices for their families, their communities, and American democracy. Focusing on the social and civic development of Latina/os and all college students, America's colleges and universities can play an increasingly focused role in preparing student to become more informed and engaged citizens - and help reinvigorate a divided and dispirited democracy.

The present study was operationalized in a way to test a model on outcomes that capture the nexus between higher education and society, as it relates to civic awareness, importance of becoming a community leader, and Latina/o student leadership development.

### **Future Research**

Changing national demographics will continue to require a focus of efforts on improving postsecondary access and success among populations who have previously been underrepresented in higher education, including first-generation, low-income and minority and underrepresented student populations. Engle and Tinto (2008) discuss barriers that low-income, first-generation students face to achieving success in college, and strategies that colleges and universities can pursue to address these barriers and improve students' chances of earning degrees, including encouraging engagement on college campuses. The findings of this study suggest that low-income students are more likely to participate in ethnic/racial student organizations. Additional research should continue to focus on identifying college activities and

environments that are both significant and positive in facilitating the development and success of first-generation, low-income, Latina/o and other minority students on U.S. colleges and universities. More research on the role of administrators and staff in creating supportive environments for diversity on campus is needed, placing student identity at the center, and affirming the need for culturally relevant activities that serve as “safe spaces” to learn and develop their leadership (Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano (2012).

Enrolling over half of Hispanic college students, Hispanic Serving Institutions will continue to play a critical role in offering access to public higher education for Latina/os (Nuñez et al., 2015). With continued research on the outcomes of Latina/o students at Hispanic Serving Institutions, we will be able to better understand the potential of these minority serving institutions on a growing Latina/o population. Researchers have revealed gaps in our knowledge base about how HSI’s operate and how they are advancing Hispanic higher education in American higher education (Hurtado & Alvarado, 2015; Núñez et al., 2015). While this study documents that HSI’s develop Latina/o college student civic awareness, there is more to be understood about student outcomes at HSI’s. Campus leaders, stakeholders, and the U.S. Department of Education will be interested in outcomes of Latina/o students at HSI’s, particularly as resources are needed to support these institutions develop their capacities and institutional agents implement transformative practices that addresses the needs of Latina/o students.

As the United States continues to realize the importance of increasing the educational attainment of its diverse citizens as key to its future economic and civic life, improving postsecondary success among underrepresented populations, such as low-income, first-generation students, Latina/o and other minority student populations will remain paramount. As

Hispanic Serving Institutions continue to educate a growing Latina/o population, research of these institutions and these students can continue to identify interactions, institutional factors, college activities and environments that continue to advance “inclusive excellence and the consequent economic and civic life of Latina/os in a changing society” (p. 42, Hurtado and Alvarado, 2015).

Bensimon and Malcom (2012) and Solórzano, Villalpando, and Oseguera (2005) assert that it is critical to recognize the role that institutions play in contributing to Latinos’ educational success. To do so, we must continue to better understand the diverse characteristics, more inclusive activities and environments, and institutional factors that facilitate key student outcomes. Nuñez, Hoover, Pickett, Stuart-Carruthers, and Vasquez (2013) considered academic, financial, cultural, and social capital in relation to Latino student success. They purposefully used the term *success* broadly, “to mean any outcome that has implications for Latino degree completion” (p. 39). As such, the present study expands our broad understanding of Latino student success by examining civic outcomes, and extending a new branch of civic capital to the research base on HSIs (Núñez et al., 2015).

### **Implications for Policy**

With Hispanic Serving Institutions now representing 13 percent of all institutions of higher education, they are educating over 60 percent of the Latino college-going population. Using data from 2014, Excelencia in Education identified 435 HSI’s in the United States and Puerto Rico. Of these, only 160 were receiving federal U.S. Department of Education Title V funds meant to assist HSI’s to expand educational opportunities for, and improve the attainment of Hispanic students (Excelencia in Education, 2016). Simply put, the growing number of HSI’s is outpacing the amount of institutional capacity building funds available, and current

appropriations cannot sustain the present and growing need. Increased federal funding is necessary to support HSIs at this critical time of reduced state appropriations for higher education. Noting that large-scale databases cannot capture practices in detail (Hurtado and Alvarado, 2015), the U.S. Department of Education should begin to require Title V grantee institutions to document practices in relation to Latina/o student outcomes, and publish these promising practices so that other institutions – including those that cannot be supported in competitive funding cycles – can benefit from the resource of information sharing.

Acknowledging the rise associated with costs of attending college, this study found family income significant and negatively associated with Latina/o students participating in ethnic/racial student organizations. With the looming threat of devastating cuts to education under the Trump Administration, including to student aid and academic preparation programs, Congress and state legislatures should remain steadfast on the need to help Latina/o and other minority student access, enroll, persist, and graduate from college. In fact, we can look at the progress already made to drive policy. The study found that the more hours per week a student reported working (for pay) was negatively associated with student involvement and engagement with ethnic/racial student organizations. Further, after controlling for income, working more hours per week for pay was also negatively associated with participating in these types of student organizations. Additional research would parse out how students reporting having to work more (for pay) are affecting the college experience and student outcomes. Given the increasing cost associated with college attendance, this warrants additional research and continued consideration if it has deleterious affects on civic development and leadership. The extent to which student aid funding improves civic outcomes has been a neglected part of the cost benefit equation, as most of the research has focused on retention (which is lowest for low-income students).



## **Implications for Practice**

The present study also informs current practice on college campuses in terms of funding for student organizations, possibly moving them from the margin to the center in terms of their benefits and contributions as the number of Latina/os increase on American college and university campus. Although the study found participating in ethnic/racial student organizations in developing the importance of becoming a community leader, surprisingly a common variable that was significant and positively associated with each outcome was participating in ethnic/cultural awareness workshops. Given the rise in documented incidents of racial conflict on colleges and university campuses, this brings the importance and value of this programming to the center. Herein lie opportunities for students, staff, and faculty to partner in coordinating timely conversations, dialogues, and workshops addressing racial and cultural awareness on campus.

Lastly, the fact that women, including Latinas continue to face challenges that their male counterparts do not, highlights that we must all continue to seek and adopt strategies that will continue to develop Latina leadership. In her study, Bonilla-Rodriguez (2011) identified six crucial positive influencers identified for Latina leadership: successful educational attainment, participating in leadership training, possessing self-confidence, having role models, religious influence, and family influence. Building on this, U.S. colleges and universities have an opportunity to create leadership training opportunities and mentorship programs that can develop Latina social capital and role models to further other opportunities to develop Latina's self-confidence.

## Conclusion

If Latina/o populations trends represent the country's future demographic reality, then it is likely that colleges and their graduates will be challenged by a society that is increasingly diverse in terms of race, culture and evolving values (Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, and Terenzini, 1996). At the turn of the century, Putnam (2000) argued that researchers across fields including education have discovered that successful outcomes are more likely in civically engaged communities. When looking at U.S. colleges and universities as campus communities, you begin to see the ways in which students, staff, faculty, and administration can together focus on fostering a more civically engaged campus community. Further, stakeholders and policy makers can all shape how we are educating every college student to become more engaged citizens, particularly the growing Latina/o community. Developing civic awareness is a first step. Inspiring Latina/os to take action follows, along with empowering their leadership ability to do so.

Gándara (2015) noted that Latinos generally are occupying a larger role in the nation's present and future, with the Hispanic community growing by 600 percent since 1970's, from 9 million to 53 million persons in 2012. In fact, she further noted, that in California and Texas, young Latina/os now constitute more than half of all students in public schools. We also see Latina/o populations growing in new areas and pockets of the country. In the end, the success and vitality of the United States, our economy, democracy, and future workforce will in large part depend on an educated and engaged Latina/o population. Let us continue to focus on doing more to improve educational preparation, college access, persistence, and graduation rates for everyone; and let us recognize that we will all benefit in direct and indirect ways from the

promise and success of Latina/o college students. The findings of this study can inform policies and practices that are supporting Latina/o students, and developing Latina/o leaders. *Adelante!*

**Appendix A: Civic Awareness Factor**

	CSS				
	A	B1	B2	B3	B4
Change: Understanding of the problems facing your community	2.09	-3.68	-2.61	-0.62	1.13
Change: Understanding of national issues	6.00	-2.65	-1.70	-0.46	1.01
Change: Understanding of global issues	3.32	-2.92	-2.01	-0.59	0.89

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\*These parameters are for use with CSS measures

**Appendix B: Positive Cross Racial Interactions Factor**

Positive Cross Racial Interactions ( $\alpha = 0.882$ )

Items	Factor Loadings
Attended events sponsored by other racial/ethnic groups	.585/.557
Dined or shared a meal	.755/.712
Had a meaningful and honest discussion about race/ethnic relations outside of class	.776/.764
Shared personal feelings and problems	.793/.803
Had an intellectual discussion outside of class	.803/.823
Studied or prepared for class	.644/.652
Socialized or partied	.702/.666
Made an effort to get to know people from diverse backgrounds	.513/.519
Robust ML Model-Fit Results NFI = .955/.980; CFI = .957/.981; RMSEA = .085/.060	

### Appendix C: Negative Cross Racial Interactions Factor

Table 3. Negative Cross Racial Interactions ( $\alpha = 0.771$ )

Items	Factor Loadings
Had guarded interactions	.661
Had tense, somewhat hostile interactions	.810
Felt insulted or threatened because of your race/ethnicity	.721

### Appendix D: Social Agency Factor

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Social Agency (Measures the extent to which students value political and social involvement as a personal goal.)

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	CSS/TFS Longitudinal*			
	A	B1	B2	B3
Goal: Keeping up to date with political affairs	1.76	2.67	-0.71	-3.61
Goal: Participating in a community action program	2.72	2.40	-1.53	-4.93
Goal: Influencing social values	1.75	2.76	-0.32	-3.22
Goal: Becoming a community leader	2.27	2.44	-1.05	-4.11
Goal; Helping others who are in difficulty	1.61	5.17	1.57	-1.53
Goal: Helping to promote racial understanding	2.61	2.53	-1.51	-4.80
<b>Change in mean from TFS to CSS is 0.28</b>				

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\* These parameters are for use with CSS data.

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