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Don't Ask, Don't Tell 'Em About College:
Brown Portrait(ure) on the Educational Experiences of
Chicano and Latino Military Veterans

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

by

Eduardo Lara

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Don't Ask, Don't Tell 'Em About College:
Brown Portrait(ure) on the Educational Experiences of
Chicano and Latino Military Veterans

by

Eduardo Lara

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Daniel G. Solórzano, Chair

This mixed-methods study of Chicano and Latino educational experiences of Latino Military Veterans utilizes critical analyses of a data set from the 2010 Population Representation in the Military Services Report and data drawn from ten participants who were interviewed using portraiture and theoretical sampling methodologies. Three research questions guide this study: 1) What are military recruitment rates of Latina/os?; 2) How does the life story of a Latino military veteran who graduated from an Orange County high school in the mid-90s shape his post-secondary academic trajectories?; and 3) How does identity influence the educational experiences of Latino military veterans? Critical race theory, borderlands theory and queer theory underwrite *Jotería* (Spanish for a Latina/o culture-specific Queer Theory), an intersectional framework used to inform how multiple social constructs and systems of oppression shape the educational experiences for Latinos as “Brown bodies.” Findings revealed Latina/o demographic inequalities in the Navy military branch of the military, intersectional

identities of Chicano and Latino study participants work as a form of habitus aligned with the institutional needs of the military, and the life story of a Latino military veteran, who also identifies as Chicano, underscored the high value placed on education.

The dissertation of Eduardo Lara is approved:

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Patricia McDonough

Daniel G. Solórzano, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

DEDICATION

Para mis abuelitos, who forged the path of *educación* from their respective *ranchos*, *El Cerro Grande* y *El Temaxcal* in the great state of *San Luis Potosí, México*.

Para mi abuelito, Cruz Lara Briseño, who immigrated to the United States as a *bracero* and eventually worked as a *carwashero* and florist, selling flowers outside of *El Torito carnicería* en Santa Ana, California. As a child, he taught me to open up the newspaper to learn about the social, cultural, economic, and political wor(l)d around me in order to transform it. *Que descanse en paz* and we shall meet again *en el otro lado*.

Para mi abuelita, Patricia Lara Castillo, who had the will, wisdom, courage and fortitude to travel from her *ranchito* to Tamaulipas, México as a young mother with her eight children in tow to pick cotton in order to put food on the table for her *familia*. As a child, she kept me up late at night with her fantastic *historias* about life *en el rancho*, including marvelous tales about folklore, salacious stories about family *escandalos*, and witty banter to make light and cope with life's challenges. From her, I learned to be an engaging storyteller with a purpose and I owe my writing voice to the seeds she planted with her astonishing tales of love, resistance, and humor.

Para mi abuelita, Alicia Carbajal Rendón, who miraculously survived breast cancer when I was a child, but in order to live, had to tap into her inner-strength *para cruzar la frontera* after she was diagnosed with her life-altering illness. After immigrating to the United States, she was successfully cured of her disease through the aid of doctors at The City of Hope who gave my *abuelita* an opportunity to live. As a child, we would walk the streets of our *vecindad* collecting

cans so she could have some extra spending money to treat my siblings and me to snacks that my parents could not afford. My *abuelita* did this while she was recovering from breast cancer and still lives as a survivor. From her, I learned to be resourceful, to always tread forward, and to survive.

Para mi abuelito, Jesús Rendón Briseño, who also immigrated to the United States as a bracero. Having never been formally educated and considered illiterate, my *abuelito* possesses intelligence and wisdom that is far beyond anything schools can teach, for my *abuelito* is a *curandero*. I grew up witnessing my *abuelito* perform miracles with his healing touch and knowledge of medicinal *hierbas*. He has the uncanny ability to sense energy lines and can manipulate them through his inherited gift – going so far as giving a young man the ability to walk again when his traditional doctors told him he would never do so. From him, I learned to always remain grounded in my *raíces indígenas*, to heal, and to believe.

And so, I believed, and completed this dissertation.

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One such acknowledgement caught my eye for its brevity. A colleague of mine, Dr. Miguel Gutierrez, simply wrote: This is for *La Raza*. I must admit, I smiled when I read this short line. This brief acknowledgement page actually spoke volumes and told a story about the amount of people and community support it takes to propel a Chicano student to the heights of academic success in the form of a doctoral degree. Reading this line through a Chicano cultural rubric, reminded me of the earworm made popular by 90s Chicano rap artist, Kid Frost. Entitled, This is for *La Raza*, the song honors the community where he came from. In much the same way,

I acknowledge the home community that helped educate me, inspire me, support me, and transform me: Santa Ana, a city de *pura Raza*.

There are too many community members to name individually, but as a group they make up the various friends and teachers who believed in me. The community of Santa Ana is also made up of the participants who volunteered to be part of this study. Truly, this work would not be possible if it weren't for the participants who conversed with me, pushed my thinking, theorized, cried with me and shared un *abrazo* on some occasions due to the heavy emotional toll that some of the interviews elicited. Without ignoring the strength derived from the community, I must also acknowledge that these military veterans endured trauma in ways that will be indexed by this work. I thank them for their willingness to be open, talk candidly, and contribute to this dissertation. I will save the more analytical findings, critique and political discussion for the work in the more academic contents, but here, in this space, I share appreciation for their contribution to knowledge production.

Of course, my family is part of the community, but by virtue of being my *familia*, they do merit special consideration in the form of specific words of gratitude. *Gracias* to my father, Dionicio Lara, who immigrated to the United States in order to provide opportunities to me and my siblings by working as a *carwashero*, forklift driver, and now a janitor. It's not lost on me that I can pursue the type of academic work I thrive on because he made the difficult decision to *crusar al otro lado* for his *familia*. However, the decision to immigrate with him and start a family en *el norte* rests solely with my mother, a strong woman I grew up admiring because I witnessed her speaking with a wild tongue against injustice. From my parents, I learned how to be resilient and have a wild tongue of my own. I thank them for those gifts. I am also indebted to my siblings for sharing a childhood rich in love, mischief, and wonder. Out of that childhood

grew a thirst for knowledge that we all share as part of our bond of *carnalismo*. Cesar, Patricia, Jesse, and Edgar – I am so thankful to have such strong *carnalismo* between us and believe me, I relied on it to get me through the final stages of writing this work.

To my *profesores* from my dissertation committee, a Dream Team of a group, who have waited patiently over the years for me to complete this dissertation – *les debo mil gracias para sus esfuerzos, consejose, y apoyo en* helping me to see this labor of love through. As I saw my five year plan turn to six, then seven and beyond due to unexpected life challenges that got in the way of writing, including health and financial hurdles, these professors never lost hope in me. To Kris, who would personally call, text, and email me to check in and encourage me to finish. Her gentle words born out of *cariño* really did help me see the finish line. She is indeed a Wonder Woman who I admire for contributing toward advancing equity in education for Chicana/o and Latina/o students. *Mil gracias*. To Pat, who was the first professor I took a class with at UCLA, College Access Seminar. Her class provided the integral space to ferment the early stages of this work. She might not remember, but I randomly ran into her one day at the student union during one of my low moments and told me, “You’ll finish.” It made an impact. I thank Pat for sensing my deflation that day and saying just enough for me to internalize the message and finish. To Leo Estrada, who gave me so many ideas on how to approach my work. While originally focused on studying the intersection of race, gender, and class for Latino Military Veterans, I forgot to include another aspect of identity that was right under my nose the whole time – military identity. Sometimes the most obvious themes in research are right in front of us and it takes just one outside observation, like the one Leo made, for us to see it. Leo’s recommendation to examine military identity in my work substantially changed the focus of the study and as Kris would say, made my findings more robust. Leo, thank you.

To Danny, who took me under his wing these past nine years, a full decade if I count the year prior to enrolling at UCLA yet attending Danny's famous Research Apprenticeship Course. One of the most accomplished yet humble scholars I know, Danny always greeted me with a warm *abrazo* prior to starting our dissertation meetings. Being a fellow avid political junkie, our meetings over Jamba Juice took us well over the time scheduled because we found ourselves getting lost in discussions on politics that would somehow segue into talking about our barbershop experiences. Now that I am writing to thank Danny for his mentorship, I realize that the space he cultivated with me over the years is akin to a Latino Barbershop – two Chicano men coming together to discuss *trabajo y politica*, but in a relaxed space. Danny, I thank you for creating a Latino Barbershop where I could comfortably bring my ideas and writing without fear of judgment or rejection, but rather a space that inspired and motivated me.

I carve out the ending of my acknowledgements to appreciate my life partner, Gaudencio Márquez. Without hesitation, he has been by my side helping me to complete this dissertation, going so far as to build me a portable air conditioner from scratch so I can write comfortably from my home-office. An unexpected heat wave made our home office feel like a sweltering sauna during the home stretch phase of writing. Gaudencio stepped into action with some Chicano ingenuity to bring a more moderate writing temperature with the help of an ice chest, ice, fan, duct, and duct tape. That's love. And I am blessed to have him in my life. Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't thank my consistent writing partner, my dog, Oreó. Having Oreó lying next to me during most of my writing sessions brought a degree of solace to my lonely writing ventures. I appreciate his presence and role as not only my buddy, but also writing companion. I finish my acknowledgements with a collective nod of gratitude to all *familia, amistades y colegas* who helped me earn those three magic letters – Ph.D.

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- 2000: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Medal for Human Rights and Service, George Washington University

Introduction: No One Told Us It was a Military Test

I wish I was pushed to go to college. Instead of counseling me to complete my high school requirements, counselors should have encouraged me to go to college. I graduated and ended up enlisting in the military out of high school. But now I enrolled at a technical college because I know I need to provide a better future for my family.

– Pedro, pilot study participant, 2006

Test day at school, 1995: *I nervously tapped my pencil against the tagged up table. I stared anxiously at the rows of books that lined the walls of the library as I waited for the test to start. With mounting apprehension evident by the sweat on my brow, I stared at the school administrator who stood at the front of the room while keeping a firm vigilant gaze at all the students; resembling more of a police officer than an assistant principal (AP). I had no idea what this test was about, nor did my other classmates. The only information shared with us came from the AP who said this test would help determine the jobs we would excel at in the future and the results of the test would help us get out of Santa Ana. Along with the other students, I thought this was pretty cool; it seemed like a personality test that would help evaluate our strengths. Finally, the tests were passed out in succinct fashion, similar to the way an assembly line of workers assemble a widget – with precision and automaticity. Like a boss signaling the start of a shift to his workers with a horn, the AP signaled the start of the test. Tick, tock, tick, tock, tick tock... three hours later, an assortment of random questions answered, and the clock finally struck 1 pm; successfully ending the test. A crowd of students hurriedly turned in their filled out bubbles to one of the proctors, in an effort to be the first in line to score the highly coveted cafeteria chocolate chip cookies.*

Several weeks later: *RING, RING, RING...hello...yes, this is Eduardo...you want me to join the military?...I scored high?! Really? On what?...Oh, it's called the ASVAB. What does it stand for?...Oh, I didn't know that. So my score means I can get any job I want? And you'll pay for college?!...Well lemme think about it...Wait, you want to meet me at school? When?...Tomorrow? Where at?...The career center, yeah, I know where that's at. See you there.*

The next day at school: *“Hey homie, did you get a call from the marines?” I asked one of my carnales, Pedro, from school. He replied, “Yeah, dawg, I got a call from this recruiter. I don't know how he got my number foo' but he told me to meet him at the career center during lunch.” I continued, “Yeah, he told me to meet him there too. Let's just head over there together after class. What career did he tell you the test said you can be?” I inquired. “He said the test indicated I would make a good cook for the military and that's better than anything I can make out of myself by staying in Santa Ana.” As I pondered these stinging words from the advice imparted on my carnal, I couldn't help but be critical of the fact that no one told us it was a military test.*

Perhaps I took an unconventional approach toward commencing this dissertation. However, it seems fitting to begin with an insightful quotation from a participant who participated in a pilot study related to my dissertation's topic due to the richness of the quote; specifically, in the way the excerpt offers a powerful critique of the way our education system often tracks Latina/o¹ students to enlist in the military as opposed to college. The narrative that follows Pedro's quote also underscores the various complex set of educational issues that are at the heart of this study, chief among them are the deceptive practices military recruiters use to recruit Latina/os to enlist in the military. This narrative also serves as a counterstory since it was constructed using data from informal interviews and it utilizes the power of portraiture; one of the methodological tools that underwrites this study. The narrative also reflects the use of portraiture² as a qualitative method to listen for a story as opposed to listen to a story in this dissertation (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Both the quote and the counterstory work in tandem to frame the purpose of this study: to understand the educational experiences of Chicano and Latino males who enlist and serve in the military after high school graduation.

To understand the drive that propels me to complete this study, I must first flesh out the context for what brings me to propose this research. As highlighted by the counterstory, the idea for this body of research came about twenty years ago when I sat down to take a test that I was misinformed about as a high school student. As it turns out, the test was the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), a multiple-aptitude test used to predict academic and occupational success in the military that is administered to over one million military applicants, including high school and post-secondary students (officialasvab.com, 2015). After taking the

¹ For the purposes of this study, Latino/a is defined as a person of Latin American origin who lives in the US. Toward the end of this chapter, I also explain why my title for the dissertation references Chicanos and Latinos.

² My rationale for referencing portraiture as portrait(ure) in the title of this dissertation is to pay homage to both the official name of the qualitative method, portraiture, and the end product, a portrait.

ASVAB, military recruiters used information from the test to make direct pitches to participants about the occupational opportunities available in the military based on the results of the exam. Coupled with a strong presence of military recruiters already on campus, military propaganda peppered throughout campus, and a strong history of alumni enlisting in the military, there was an over-whelming military enlistment culture³ present on high school as opposed to a college-going culture.

In their work, McClafferty, McDonough, and Nuñez (2002), identify four conditions and nine principles that help designate high schools as having a college-going culture. I argue that parallel conditions and principles exist in some high schools that create more of a military-going culture. In table 1.1 that follows, I illustrate the various criteria used to identify a college going culture and borrow the work to reframe the criteria for high schools that reflect a military going culture:

³ To avoid my discussion on military versus college-going culture to be misinterpreted as a strict dichotomous view, it's possible for some schools that exhibit a military-going culture to simultaneously create a schooling milieu where students multiple cultural practices co-exist. For example, some schools can have three sets of schooling cultures co-existing where some students are militarized, others pegged as college-going, and yet others are criminalized. In some cases, an intersection of two or more schooling milieus subjects students to multiple schooling and cultural rubrics. For example, a student can be both militarized and criminalized and such schooling rubrics may actually work in concert with one another.

Table 1.1: College Going Culture vs. Military Going Culture High Schools

Criteria	College Going Culture	Military Going Culture
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leadership is committed to building a college culture • All school personnel provide a consistent message to students that supports their quest for a college preparatory K-12 experience • All counselors are college counselors • Counselors, teachers, and parents are partners in preparing students for college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leadership is committed to building a military culture (i.e. programming JROTC courses on campus) • Many school personnel provide a consistent message to students that supports their quest for a military experience post high school graduation • Military recruiters are actively engaged on campus, including participating in career fairs, having a presence in counseling offices and career centers, and/or having school space officially allocated to recruiters when on campus • Military enlistment literature (propaganda) is readily accessible on campus
Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Talk • Clear Expectations • Information and Resources • Comprehensive Counseling Model • Testing and Curriculum • Faculty Involvement • Family Involvement • College Partnerships • Articulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military Talk • Expectations to Enlist in Military • Military Information and Resources • Military Recruiters act as Counselors • ASVAB Testing on Campus • Active Military Partnerships

In addition to borrowing some of the language reflected in the conceptualization of high schools with a college going culture, I also drew on my own experience and observation of high schools that cultivate a military going culture to identify conditions and principles reflecting such a

culture. It is important to have a working understanding of high schools with a military going culture because this study focuses on research participants who graduated from a high school reflecting the conditions and principles illustrated in the chart above.

Arguably, this military going culture helped steer every single one of my close male friends from high school to enlist and join the military upon high school graduation. I also came close to enlisting due to tempting offers from recruiters who promised money for college based on benefits provided by the GI Bill. As tempting as the offer for college money was, I am grateful that my college financial aid packages and scholarship money allowed me to attend college. However, twenty years later, thoughts continue to linger regarding the deceptive practices employed by military recruiters to enlist Latina/os upon high school graduation and as a result, I question if their promises of college access indeed came to fruition. I also question and challenge the deficit framework used by recruiters, school administrators, and teachers to describe the community I grew up in as one that is detrimental to the academic success of students.

To understand such a need for this study, I will briefly articulate the central background related to my study that elucidates the significance of this research in the section that follows. I will then use the information in my problem statement to craft specific research questions. Finally, I will conclude with a roadmap for the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

Problem Statement

Higher education enrollment for Latina/os is low when compared to other racial groups and relative to their proportion of the general population. Access to higher education for Latino males is of particular concern. A Latina/o Education Summit Report published in 2006, paints a

very disturbing picture of the California Education Pipeline for Latina/o students attending public schools. According to a Latina/o Education Summit Report, out of 100 Latinas who enter the California public schools, only 54 will graduate high school and only eleven of those students will graduate with a bachelor's degree (Pérez Huber, Huidor, Malagón, Sanchez, & Solórzano, 2006). The pipeline fares worse for Latinos. For every 100 Latinos who enter California public schools, only 51 will graduate from high school and only ten of these students will walk across the stage to receive their bachelor's degree (Pérez Huber et al., 2006).

These statistics are in sharp contrast to the California Education pipeline for white students. To illustrate, out of 100 white female students who start their schooling in CA public education, 84 graduate from high school and 24 graduate with their bachelor's degree (Pérez Huber et al., 2006). The statistics are similar for white male students; out of 100 who enter the CA public school system, 83 will graduate from high school and 28 will obtain a bachelor's degree (Pérez Huber et al., 2006). Considering that Latina/os account for 47% of the K-12 public school students in the state whereas white students account for only 31% of students, the graduation rates for these two populations serve as a sharp reminder of the sharp enrollment gap in higher education for Latina/os (Pérez Huber, et al., 2006).

National high school graduation rates for Latina/os do not fare much better. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2006), Latina/os will drive future demographic growth and diversification well into the 21st century. Currently, there are approximately ten million Latinos enrolled in US public schools (US Dept. of Education, 2007). In 2005, only 58% of Latina/os graduated from high school on time, compared to 78% of whites (Editorial Projects in Education, 2008). The on-time graduation rate for Latino males was 52% nationally in 2005, compared to 74% for white males (Editorial Projects in Education, 2008). These large dropout rates for

Latina/os can be explained in part from a lack of preparation to make a successful transition into high school (Pérez Huber et al., 2006).

Latina/os also find themselves with little guidance and access to information pertaining to college admission and financial aid. Although counselors are provided in high school, the counselor to student ratio is so large that the task of providing quality college counseling is daunting (McDonough, 2005). More often than not, college counselors approach their work with the goal of getting student to graduate from high school as opposed to getting them to attend college (McDonough, 2005). Military recruiters are aware of the situation at such schools and subsequently take advantage of this situation and use successful recruiting tactics. Furthermore, military recruiters outnumber college counselors on campuses with a predominant number of Latina/os and other students of color.

Latina/o high school students are heavily recruited by the military and use tactics that are deceptive and counterproductive toward the goal of creating a college going culture in majority Latino high schools. When factoring in a lack of resources, information, and a small number of college counselors, Latina/o students are taken advantage of by military recruiters who make empty promises of better opportunities if they join the military. For example, students are promised better college opportunities, good pay while in the military and good job opportunities after completing service (Ayers, 2006; Merrow, 2005). Often times these promises do not materialize after enlisting in the military.

Consequently, as a result of the lack of emphasis in creating a college-going culture in many Latina/o-majority high schools, many Latina/os believe they do not have many options after high school. After graduating from high school, many Latina/os with aspirations to attend college generally limit their choices to the following post secondary education routes: 1) enlist in

the military as a means to pay for college, 2) reside in the community and work full or part-time while attending community college, or 3) work full-time in hopes to save money for college. Military recruiters exploit the reality that many Latina/os face when considering higher education options. Subsequently, recruiters steer students toward the military option as a way to leave the community and afford students the option of going to college later as a result of GI bill benefits or use the skills obtained from military service to acquire a good paying job. After serving in the military for four years, students return to the community only to realize the skills obtained from military training do not necessarily translate to civilian life nor provide a well paying job.

Background and Significance

In California, almost 70% of all Latina/o high school students are enrolled in classes that do not meet the minimum course requirements for in-state four-year universities (Collatos, Morrell, Nuño, & Lara, 2004). Although Latina/os comprise the majority of public school students across the state, this group is being denied the opportunity to apply for college admission because schools have created institutional barriers for this particular group to meet the necessary requirements to be eligible for admission. For example, Latina/o students are significantly more likely to have their college plans influenced by their high school counselors and yet these students are least likely to have counselors, the most likely to have under-prepared counselors, and the most likely to have counselors pulled away from college counseling to work on other counseling tasks (Fann, Calderone, & McDonough, 2006). Indeed, Latina/os are often subjected to a counseling model that stresses high school completion over college access and preparation. Further data on this marginalized group of students reveal that only 52% of

Latina/os earned a high school diploma in 2000 (Collatos et al., 2000) and Latino males have one of the lowest college-going rates for under-represented students.

According to critical narratives from Latina/os who share an insiders' perspective conveying explanations for low enrollment in college, "daily worries such as how safe it is for students to walk home, what to do when confronted by a gang member, and not to make it until tomorrow" exacerbate the problem (Collatos et al., 2004). One narrative from Collatos's work explains that "when raised in a low-income neighborhood, you have a completely different view of what is essential to live and what to worry about compared to fellow students growing up in a wealthy community" (p. 170). The context of their lives and community realities that many Latina/os face are very different from their affluent and white counterparts.

Guidance and counseling staff serve an important primary function in the transmission of college-relevant information to students (Fann, Calderone, & McDonough, 2006). Counselors impact students' aspirations, plans, course enrollments, financial aid knowledge and that meeting frequently with a counselor increases a student's chance of enrolling in a four-year college. Latina/os, however, are reluctant to use counselors because they are perceived to be uniformed and hostile, have well documented reputations for placing students in non-college recommending classes, and historically have thwarted students' and their parents' educational aspirations (Fann et al., 2006).

Counselors are the primary gatekeepers for college access and are charged with the responsibility of advising students to attend college. A large portion of Latina/os attend inner-city schools with not only high counselor-to-student ratios, but the quality of counseling service is sub-par when compared to high schools located in more affluent communities. According to McDounough (2005), ratios average over 1,000 students per counselor in some urban schools.

Counselors are the obvious choice to entrust the role of college access preparation, yet they are not trained and structurally constrained from being able to fulfill this role in large, urban, public high schools (McDonough, 2005). Inner-city counselors are predominantly concerned with getting students to graduate from high school in an effort to decrease the high school drop-out rate for Latinos. College admission counseling rarely is utilized by counselors who are preoccupied with their large counseling load, lack of resources, paltry outreach budgets, and focus on dropout prevention.

Latina/os in California are concentrated in overcrowded, under-resourced schools that are most in need of qualified teachers (Oakes, Mendoza, & Silver, 2004). Considering this abysmal condition of such schools and the increase in the Latina/o population, it is not difficult to see why so many Latina/os drop out of school before graduating from high school. Furthermore, those that do graduate may be discouraged from enrolling in college due to their negative experience of K-12 public schools. Lastly, the low percentages of Latina/o students who are eligible for university admission can partly be explained by the cumulative effects of inadequate academic preparation, negative teacher expectations, and the disproportionate tracking of students of color into non-academic vocational courses, making access to college seem beyond reach for these students (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1995).

Certain parents, students, teachers, and administrators have become critical of military recruitment on high school campuses due to a provision in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requiring school districts to share with military recruiters the contact information of all high school juniors and seniors. Taking into account the current political climate regarding military conflict due to a post-Iraq war fought under false pretenses, the controversy surrounding military recruitment has intensified and some parents are opting to have their children's names taken off

lists submitted to military recruiters. However, not all parents have the social capital to access information pertaining to opting out of military recruitment. Particularly, Latina/o parents may not be aware that lists of students are even distributed to military recruiters due to language barriers and unfamiliarity with NCLB. High school Latina/os are also a highly coveted group of students that military recruiters specifically target due to their higher propensity to enlist when compared to other ethnic groups.

Prior to NCLB, school board policy could effectively prohibit administrators from giving student information to anyone, including recruiters. However, NCLB has made it easier to recruit on high school campuses because of the provision mandating districts to hand out the names, phone numbers, and addresses of every junior and senior. High schools are seen as a rich recruitment ground, particularly in the case of schools where most students do not plan to go to college (Merrow, 2005). Furthermore, recruiters tend to focus on schools with a high concentration of students with low socio-economic backgrounds because they are susceptible to the financial incentives offered by the military. Even though a salary of \$ 28,738 may not be a lot of money when compared to higher paying salaries, but a salary of over \$ 28,000 may be perceived as a lot of money to a high school student who grew up in a poor neighborhood. This is especially true if a student grows up with parents making less than a fresh enlistee in the military. Students from financial disadvantaged backgrounds also do not have the financial means to pay for college nor have as much access to information regarding financial aid. Subsequently, when presented with an option to earn a salary while in the military versus paying to go to college, the former choice is financially more lucrative in the short-run. In sharp contrast, schools with students from wealthier families and a high percentage of college-bound

students are not viewed as good prospects by recruiters and do not waste time and resources recruiting at schools in affluent neighborhoods.

According to Ashford (2005), there have been reports of recruiters seeking out lower-income students or using misleading tactics in the course of their recruiting efforts. Concrete recruiting strategies that target Latina/os include handing out promotional materials in Spanish. Recruiters even go as far as contributing time and resources toward ethnic-related events such as Hispanic Heritage Month. These tactics clearly convey a message that Latina/os are highly coveted amongst military recruiters, but one must explore the underlying reasons explaining why Latina/os are coveted by military recruiters in order to understand the larger picture.

Research findings have indicated that Latina/os have a more favorable attitude toward military service than any other ethnic group (Bartling & Eisenman, 1992). According to a national survey of high school seniors in the Bartling and Eisenman (1992) study, 45% of Latinos responded that they would either probably or definitely serve in the military compared with only 15% of whites. These high propensity rates are no secret to military recruiters and unfairly target Latina/os who are stereotyped as not being college material to enlist for active duty.

Research Questions

I used an insightful quote from Pedro at the beginning of this chapter to highlight his critique of an education system that unjustly tracks Latina/os into the military rather than steer this group into college. The critique was further reinforced by a narrative constructed with Pedro in mind, further emphasizing deceptive practices used by military recruiters to steer Latina/os toward enlisting in the military as a means to attend college. The use of the ASVAB as a

predictor of academic and occupational roles in the military was specifically referenced as a concrete example of a tool used to pigeonhole Latina/os into jobs that are racialized. Furthermore, a complex set of issues that Latina/os face when grappling with their post-secondary education options was laid out in the remaining chapter as a way to tease out the scope of the problem that this dissertation underscores.

Considering all these factors, the intent of this dissertation is to critically examine the aforementioned issues in a study originally designed for Latino males. However, as one of the findings chapters eventually highlights, Chicano identity as a racialized experience became a reoccurring theme in my data and consequently, I amended my original title for this dissertation to capture the saliency of participants identifying as both Chicano and Latino. By drawing on theoretical sampling and portraiture as a methodology, the study aims to yield a composite for this group through an in-depth portrait resulting in an understanding of the rich, complex, and robust life stories of Latinos with a particular emphasis on educational experiences. To meet such an agenda for this dissertation, I have outlined the following research questions and corresponding rational statements:

- 1) As a way to understand the military recruitment pipeline for Latina/os, what are the recruitment rates for this group?
 - In particular, what are the recruitment demographics by race and gender for each military branch of the military?
 - How do such recruitment demographics compare against 18 to 24 year old civilians?
 - What does a military recruitment pipeline analysis reveal about race and gender?

Rationale: Knowing the Latina/o recruitment rates will help understand the military recruitment pipeline for this group. Findings based on this question will also flesh

out emerging analyses and narratives chronicling how these groups compare against other racial and gendered groups.

2) How does the life story of a Latino military veteran who graduated from an Orange County high school in the mid-90s shape their post-secondary academic trajectories?

- In particular, how did his formal academic educational experiences shape their life stories as a result of participating in the military? How did his life stories influence the decision to either enlist in the military?
- Using a more inclusive view of education, how did his non-formal educational experiences shape their life stories as a result of participating in the military?
- What roles did the school, family, community, and military play in the life story for a Latino military veteran?

Rationale: Through the use of portraiture as a qualitative method of inquiry, this research question fundamentally addressed the complexity of rich experiences for the one participant as an exemplar for the group of participants interviewed for this study. Findings for this question helped to understand and theorize about the educational experiences for this group in a social and cultural context. Insight gained from a life story has implications for the sociology of education. Collectively, I used these implications to reframe the educational paradigm for Chicano and Latino male students.

3) How does identity influence the educational experiences of Latino military veterans?

- Specifically, how does the intersection of identities shape their post-secondary academic trajectories?

- In particular, how does an intersectional framework that accounts for racial, gender, sexual and military identity help illuminate the oppressive and discriminatory challenges faced by this group?

Rationale: This question effectively centers the intersectional roles of race, racism, gender, sexism, sexuality, heterosexism and military and militarism into the primary research agenda for this study. By specifically adopting an intersectional perspective into one of the primary research questions, the connection between the theoretical framework and approach toward the study becomes clear. Using this intersection as a lens and a topic of inquiry ensured these issues were adopted into the narratives for the life stories that this study generated.

These research questions guided the fruition of the study and I purposefully listed these research questions in the original order that I envisioned when I first proposed the study. However, my findings chapters discuss how the data analysis phase of the study rendered a reworking of some of the questions and the sequence that I use to answer them. In the following chapters, I will outline the various theoretical orientations that I drew from that inspired me to conceptualize a theoretical framework utilizing an intersectional approach toward my proposed work. Chapter 2 also addresses the current literature base as it relates to my proposed study's topic. Chapter 3 presents a blueprint for mapping out the theoretical sampling and portraiture methodology with the goal to centralize the voice of the proposed study's participants. This chapter also addresses how my theoretical framework is adopted into my overall research design and reviews the data collection, coding, and analysis process for my study.

Chapter 4 broaches the findings section of the dissertation, starting with discussion on the military recruitment pipeline. I then segue to the a discussion on the qualitative-oriented questions of this study in Chapter 5 where I discuss the intersectional identities of Chicano and Latino military veterans by using the theme of Spiritual Warriors. Chapter 6 ends my findings portion of the dissertation by providing the hallmark of this dissertation – a portrait on reframing the educational paradigm for Chicano and Latino male students. It is here, where I flip the paradigm by aptly titling this chapter, Ask ‘Em, Tell ‘Em About College. Finally, my concluding remarks in Chapter 7 revisit the research questions by providing a brief retelling of the findings in the more detail-oriented Chapters 4 through 6. I then use the condensed answers to my research questions to fashion together a Brown Masculinity Priming for Military Recruitment Model as my theoretical contribution to the field.

Finally, a note on my writing style worth mentioning as a way to prime the reading of this dissertation: similar to this introductory chapter, each subsequent chapter begins with an epigraph. I intentionally either write a vignette or use salient data to capture the essence of each chapter. The epigraphs I wrote or selected are intentionally meant to invoke a more literary tone and often the language used is more informal than the academic voice reflected in traditional dissertation prose. This writing approach effectively allowed me to bridge the gap between literary discourse and conventional academic writing. In other words, my unabashed commitment to marry the art and science of writing served as a nod to Lawrence-Lightfoot’s portraiture as method. After all, a dissertation should tell a story. And the story here is about Brown men. Brown men and their *educación*.⁴ Want to learn more about *educación*? Turn the page, for the answer is in the next chapter.

⁴ I purposefully wrote this sentence as a fragment to channel in a more informal tone as a reflection of the argument I made in this paragraph.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature: *Teoría de Jotería* and Military Sociology

*I experience my world through bilingual eyes, ears and tongue. Spanish. English.
Y todo in between.*

There was a point when I had mastered el Inglés well enough to get by as an undercover monolingual but I discovered something English teachers failed to tell me about el Inglés: too much black and white in that world.

I had even gone as far as earn a papel that says I am a master of English as a second language. Según, el papel me da permiso to take everyone's crayons away. I now refuse and instead equip students with a big box of 64-crayons, con sharpener y todo.

I prefer my world en colores. It's a world of wonder. Palabras pop. Y cuando nos conviene, podemos esconder sentido a cierta gente. Y la neta, jugando con palabras is fun. Como un coloring book.

– Eduardo Lara, 37 year old Bilingual and Spanglish writer

I originally wrote the epigraph for this chapter as a social media post during a week of intense dissertating. As is the case with most formal writing, I reached many writing blocks throughout the process and turned to social media to momentarily distract me from periods when I could not write another sentence on my dissertation. What I found from this habit was my informal creative writing exercises on social media eventually became writing warm ups that I used strategically to get me to write in the mornings. The epigraph I share here anchors this chapter because it speaks to both my preferred writing voice and lens I used to make sense of the social world – Spanglish.

This chapter is divided into two formal parts: 1) discussion of literature regarding my theoretical framework and 2) discussion of literature pertaining to my study with a focus on military sociology. The parts complement one another to form a review of the literature informing my study's topic. The first part will discuss how I selected and fashioned together a theoretical framework I call, *Teoría de Jotería*. The contents of this section will incorporate Spanglish, hence, the use of the epigraph to reflect this theme. Due to the informal nature of the

epigraph, I did not want to interrupt the intended cadence of the piece with English translations. However, when appropriate, I translate some of the words in Spanish from the more formal writing in this chapter to allow for monolingual readers of English to access the content. I now transition over to a discussion of literature pertaining to my theoretical framework. In other words and in the spirit of the epigraph, I discuss how I use specific colors to frame my study.

Theoretical Framework

Setting the Stage: Positioning My Identity as a Lens

A conventional dissertation positions the literature review before the section outlining the theoretical framework. The rationale behind such sequencing is that the literature review often informs the development and final construction of the lens used to interpret data in the proposed study. To be frank, I am not one to uphold a conventional form of academic writing because for me, it often stifles what Wright Mills (1959) called the sociological imagination – the ability to grasp history and biography and the relationships between the two within society – and subsequently writing tends to become stagnant. For me, writing is art, a way to express ideas that challenge, inspire, and provoke and in turn, spur further creation by those that come across such art. In the spirit of writing as art, I argue that my theoretical framework **MUST** precede the more standard literature review because theory also informs how literature is interpreted, especially when the lens I adopt is one that is so intimately connected to who I am.

I must be forthcoming and admit to the challenging yet healing process inherent in writing this chapter. It has been a challenge to write because the chapter takes an intimate and introspective approach toward utilizing my multiple identities as a gay Xicano man as an intersectional lens for use as a theoretical framework in my dissertation. I prefer to write the

ethnic and political identity label “Xicano” with an “X” rather than the more common spelling, “Chicano”, as homage to the roots of the original writing of the word; one whose rich indigenous history is best captured in the following witty rendering by creative writer and artist, José Antonio Burciaga (1993):

Chicano is more than a political label for it has a link to our indigenous past. Its etymology dates to the conquest of the *Valle de Mexica*. Mexica was pronounced “Meshica.” The Spaniards had no letter or sound in their alphabet for the Nahuatl “sh” or hard”j” so they put an “x” in its place. Meshico became México and Tejas, Texas. The first Mestizos were born of Spanish soldiers and indigenous maidens. This scorned underclass of “half-breeds” were called meshicanos, which evolved to shicanos. Chicanos is nothing more than an abbreviated form for Mexicanos (p. 49).

The X in Xicano also serves as a stylistic preference that visually privileges my indigenous roots as a way of knowing; in other words, an epistemology that stems from being indigenous as is evident by the Aztec warrior hook of my nose. As Velasco (2006) states, the “X” also acts as a signifier of race, gender and sexuality as it seeks to reauthorize traditional boundaries for such social locations. Furthermore, the “X” allows for the focus on indigenous and non-patriarchal identity and it is both masculine and feminine because it is a Nahuatl-based word (Velasco, 2006). This duality in gender is advanced by Delgado-Bernal’s (1998) depiction of a Chicana epistemology that maintains connections to indigenous roots “by embracing [gender] dualities that are necessary and complementary qualities, and by challenging dichotomies that offer opposition without reconciliation”(p. 560).

In the process of writing this chapter, I had to critically reflect on my experiences with regards to identity and connect them to the crux of this proposed study: to understand the life stories and identities of Latino military veterans with a particular emphasis on their educational experiences. Paradoxically, this challenging journey to flesh out the details of my theoretical framework has also proved to be a source of healing, particularly because it created a space for

me to chronicle how I arrived at a crossroads of perspectives explaining who I am and how I make sense of the social world through an emerging approach called *Teoría de Jotería*, or more simply, *Jotería*. By virtue of this taxing process, there comes a sense of healing due to the therapeutic effect inherent in articulating theoretical ideas that have been simmering at the surface of my lips for quite some time.

To meet the objectives of this section I will present, define, and discuss *Jotería* as the theoretical framework for my dissertation. I also iron out how this lens will assist in answering the research questions by borrowing Crenshaw's work on intersectionality to argue that the "intersectional experience is greater than the sum of its parts" (1989). In order to understand *Jotería*, I turn to a rich history of other theoretical tools that helped me conceptualize this new framework as one that privileges key aspects of my own identity as a lens to centralize the role and intersection⁵ of race, racism, gender, sexism, sexuality, and heterosexism, for this study proposal; a conceptual space that I place in a Latina/o *Educación*⁶ context and refer to as *Jotería*. To help me flesh out the argument for such a framework, I will turn to *Teatro Xicano*⁷ as a metaphor to explain how frameworks such as Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Queer Theory (QT), coupled with concepts such as Anzaldúa's *La Facultad* and Delgado-Bernal's cultural intuition, led me to conceptualize the theoretical underpinnings of the intersectional framework that construct a *Jotería* perspective.

⁵ I omitted military identity and militarism from discussion of the theoretical framework because as originally conceived, the framework can be used for a broader Latina/o demographic as opposed to only Latino military veterans.

⁶ I rely on Reese's definition of *Educación* to mean a holistic approach of education a child, inclusive of moral development, family upbringing, and having high aspirations for achievement.

⁷ Although more commonly referred to as Teatro Chicano, I choose to utilize the letter "X" in place of "Ch" in the word "Chicano" as an homage to the indigenous epistemology of the word. For more information on the history of "Xicano with and X" see Jose Burciaga's book, *Drink Cultura*.

By using the stage and various *actos*⁸ from a play as analogies for my discussion in this section, I will articulate how I borrow yet critique CRT and QT. I also stand to benefit from the emancipatory tradition of *Teatro Xicano* to arrive at the conceptual space that is the underpinning of the intersection⁹ that a *Jotería* perspective elicits. Traditionally, *actos* reflect the reality of the farm worker as a symbolic, emblematic presentation of what the farm worker feels (Mündel, 2007). In a similar fashion, this section will integrate *actos* reflecting my reality. And finally, utilizing *Teatro Xicano* as a metaphor will also help me craft this first part of the chapter as a story; a story that archives how I arrived at my theoretical framework for my dissertation, helping me to challenge and resist traditional frames of research.

Act I: ¿Soy joto, y qué? (I'm gay, and what?)

As a gay Xicano man, I have no choice but to make sense of the world through the lens afforded to me by this identity. Paulo Freire (1994) captures the essence of this ability to “read the world” by reframing marginality as a site that nourishes the capacity to resist while offering the possibility of radical¹⁰ perspectives from which to see, create, and imagine new worlds. One such view can be found in Anzaldúa’s (1987) work where she extends and queers the process of “reading the world” in a Latina/o context by referring to it as *La Facultad*. She explains:

La facultad is the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an instant “sensing,” a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning... Those who do not

⁸ In Teatro Chicano, acts were referred to as *actos*, and were further defined as sketches that foregrounded and challenged the racist stereotypes of Mexicans in the US.

⁹ More commonly referred to as intersectionality, I define it as the “oppression that arises out of a combination of various forms of discrimination, which together produce something unique and distinct from any one form of discrimination standing alone” (Reynoso, J., 2004, p. 64).

¹⁰ Radical is often used in a negative light but I regard the word as a positive descriptor for ideas that are different, progressive, transformative and offer insight.

feel psychologically or physically safe in the world are more apt to develop this sense. Those who are pounced on the most have it the strongest – the females, the homosexuals of all races, the darkskinned, the outcast, the persecuted, the marginalized, the foreign. When we're up against the wall, when we have all sort of oppressions coming at us, we are forced to develop this faculty so that we'll know when the next person is going to slap us or lock us away (p. 38 & 39).

Indeed, Anzaldúa accurately captures a consciousness of borderlands that exists as an in-between state that refuses to privilege a single core identity, but rather speaks to a hybridity of identity that confronts racism, sexism and heterosexism (Roque Ramirez, 2006).

This consciousness has also been identified, discussed and conceptualized by other notable scholars, though the name attributed to such a concept varies and adopted to fit a corresponding intersection of social locations. For example, Delgado-Bernal (1998) refers to such a consciousness as “cultural intuition” as a way to “name a complex process that acknowledges the unique viewpoints that many Chicana scholars bring to the research process” (p. 555). She elaborates on cultural intuition by paralleling it to “‘theoretical sensitivity’ – a personal quality of the researcher based on the attribute of having the ability to give meaning to data” (p.563). However, Delgado-Bernal distinguishes between cultural intuition and theoretical sensitivity by grounding the experiences of Chicanas within the four sources that contribute to theoretical sensitivity and expands on them by including collective experience, community memory and participants’ engaging in data analysis to the formation of cultural intuition.

A discussion of *La Facultad*, cultural intuition, and theoretical sensitivity aptly renders a description of the process by which gay Latina/os read the world but omits defining the actual space gay Latina/os occupy. For a discussion on the space that gay Latina/os situate, I turn to Moraga’s seminal work in her proposal for a Queer Aztlán. Moraga’s (2004) reformation of Chicano tribe calls for a Chicano homeland that is inclusive of its *Jotería*, a label she refers to as a Chicano term for “queer” folk. In her essay, Morraga critiques the Chicano Movement and

traditional conceptualizations of Aztlán by exposing the homophobic and patriarchal treatment of women and gays by the male heterosexual leadership of *El Movimiento*. Moraga also sheds light on the queer movement's omission of People of Color¹¹ from their struggle. I parallel Moraga's critique of each movement in my development of *Jotería* as a framework while I simultaneously argue that the meaning of *Jotería* can be extended to accurately define the intersection of race, racism, gender, sexism, sexuality, and heterosexism in a Latina/o-oriented context. Before I expand on the concept of *Jotería*, a discussion of the etymology of the word *joto* is in order.

The word, *joto*, has traditionally been used by Latina/os as a pejorative term to refer to a homosexual. It has been used as a word to convey hurt and insult. However, the Latina/o gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) community have recently reclaimed the word as a term of empowerment, similar to the way the white LGBTQ community reclaimed the word "queer" in the 1990s as a positive term to refer to their group. *Joto* takes on the plural form of *Jotería* when referring to the Latino Queer community. I purposefully capitalize the word *Jotería* to reinforce the connotation of empowerment through the symbolic means of always referring to the word as a proper noun.

I admit using the word *Joto* and *Jotería* does present some challenges. Though I intentionally use these words as symbolic efforts to reclaim the words and strip them of their pejorative roots, my tongue still renders a stinging layer of hurt when my ears pick up on the intonation of these two words. Forming these words with my tongue instantly brings back my earliest memory of hearing the word *joto* used as a slur to inflict pain to a gay Latina/o. To elaborate, I remember being a child attending a Mexican wedding with my maternal grandmother when I first heard the word *joto* being uttered. Due to her religious upbringing as a Catholic

¹¹ I capitalize People of Color as a political tool to visually demonstrate resistance toward a system that historically and traditionally frames this group as a subjugated population. My choice to capitalize People of Color serves as a reminder that this group has a rich history of using agency to resist oppression.

woman and being subjected to the homophobic culture that privileges macho men over feminine men, my grandmother used the word *joto* to describe an effeminate man who had made quite an entrance at the wedding reception.

I vividly remember being intrigued by this man who did not conform to the macho tradition of masculinity that my father and uncles reflected. There was no doubt of the machismo they clearly reflected in their deep baritone voices, the *vaquero*/cowboy hats they wore, the large belt buckles that drew attention to their manhood, tight jeans that accented the male physique, and the assertive stance they used to convey dominance. This effeminate man contradicted such notions of masculinity and this was unacceptable in my grandmother's judging eyes. Considering her her reaction, I knew that to deviate from traditional Latino masculinity was akin to committing cultural suicide as was evidenced by the negative reaction of my grandmother toward seeing a gay man sashay into the wedding. From that point forward, I internalized the word *joto* under a homophobic rubric that regulated the word as a derogatory label. As a result, I hid from the word *joto* in the proverbial closet.

Ironically, it was my grandmother who unknowingly brought home gay pornographic videotapes on one of her ritualistic hunts for aluminum cans in the neighborhood and helped me realize that I indeed am a *Joto*. As a way to help make ends meet, my grandmother would routinely roam around the neighborhood looking for aluminum cans to redeem for a nickel apiece. In the process, she would bring back all sorts of quixotic treasure hunt finds. On one occasion, my grandmother brought back videotapes she assumed to be blank. She gave them to me with the intent for me to film home-movies of our family's *carne asadas*/barbeques over them. The titles of the videotapes did pique my curiosity and upon checking the videotapes, I

quickly learned that I indeed am a *Joto*, but I did not come to fully accept this identity or the term until many years later.

In fact, reclaiming the word *Joto* and the resulting conceptualizing of a *Jotería* perspective was born over a decade later out of rich conversations I had with other gay Latino men regarding the insight we offer to a variety of discourses due to the specific intersection of identities we carry within us and selectively showcase depending on the audience. In other words, this insight is what Anzaldúa (1987) referred to as *La Facultad*, “a kind of survival tactic that people, caught between two worlds, unknowingly cultivate” (p. 39). It is this very *Facultad* that allows me to see, feel, live, and be *Jotería*.

Implicitly embedded in *Jotería* are the social constructs of race, gender, and sexuality. These social constructs are used as categories to define people against narrow labels that traditionally have been viewed through a western lens, which appropriates normalcy along these constructs as white, male and heterosexual. Members of groups, such as People of Color, women, or gays, who define or are defined by the majoritarian labels imposed upon them by members of the dominant group are subjected to marginalized spaces as a result of discriminatory and oppressive practices manifesting themselves as systems of power and oppression such as racism, sexism, and/or heterosexism.

Various theoretical orientations have been conceptualized to assist scholars in challenging discrimination and bringing to the forefront *Jotería* in their analyses of these issues. However, my tenure in the field of sociology and education has led me to conclude there are a lack of tools at my disposal that allow me to account for the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality for the kind of scholarship I write about in this dissertation. On one hand, CRT acknowledges multiple forms of oppression, yet centers the role of race and racism in its analysis

and subsequently discussions of sexuality and gender are often left at the margins. QT on the other hand, challenges traditional constructs of gender and sexuality that are produced using a hetero/homo binary discourse, but omits any discussion of race in its framework. As a result of these omissions in both CRT and QT, I both critique and draw from these two frameworks as I lead up to the framing of *Jotería*.

In the *actos* that follow, I discuss CRT and QT while I also delve into a critique of each in their ability, or rather inability, to account for the intersectionality *Jotería* highlights. Specifically, I point out the limitation of each theory as it pertains to the utility of using either framework to analyze the intersection, centrality, and complexity of *Jotería*. I then flesh out the details pertaining to *Jotería* within a Latina/o centered and holistic learning approach known as *Educación*. I conclude with a final *acto* that explains how a *Jotería* approach in my study aptly documented the educational experiences of Latino military veterans.

Act II: Critical Race Theory

In the mid 1970s, civil rights attorney and legal scholar Derrick Bell crafted the early beginnings of CRT by arguing that progress and strides made after the passage of the civil rights movement via a colorblind approach toward social justice actually institutionalized racism even further into the American psyche. Bell worked toward challenging existing laws and carried his work over to Harvard University where he continued to contribute to legal discourse by examining racial issues within the context of their economic, social, and political dimensions using a legal standpoint (Agulefo, Thornton, Bakenhus, & Holmes, 2001).

Richard Delgado, another legal scholar, advanced the field of CRT further in the 1980s. Specifically, Delgado defended Bell's use of storytelling as a way to share the experiences of

people of color that is often left out of the dominant discourse. Delgado (1995) describes CRT as a dynamic, eclectic, and growing movement in the law that challenges racial orthodoxy, shakes up the legal academy, questions comfortable liberal premises, and leads the search for new ways of thinking about the nation's most intractable, and insoluble, problem – race. CRT in the law is centered on three key premises. These premises are as follows:

- 1) Racism is normal in American society. As a result, laws that establish equality for all can only limit racism in a legal context but can not limit operationalized racism (e.g. racial microaggressions).
- 2) Storytelling can be used as a legitimate method of challenging racial oppression and the status quo by using the experiential knowledge of people of color to construct a reality that opposes the dominant discourse.
- 3) White elites will only tolerate racial advances for people of color when they also promote white self-interest, a concept developed by Derrick Bell and referred to as interest-convergence.

The three premises inform and provide direction for CRT's use in legal articles. For example, critical race scholars lean on CRT when using biographies, autobiographies, stories, and counterstories to expose the false necessity and unintentional irony of much current civil rights law and scholarship (Delgado, 1995).

In the 1990s, CRT was applied to the field of education in order to examine how race and racism play a role in shaping unequal educational practices. In their seminal work, *Toward a Critical Race Theory in Education*, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) offer an adaptation of CRT in the field of education by arguing that in the US, race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity. These two scholars further assert that society is based on property rights, and the intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which social and school inequity can be understood.

Scholars such as Solórzano, Delgado Bernal, and Yosso expanded the use of CRT by adapting the following five tenets as an educational framework: 1) Focuses on the centrality and

intersectionality of race and racism, 2) Challenges dominant ideology on its use of deficit thinking, 3) Commits to social justice, 4) Makes use of experiential knowledge by people of color, 5) Promotes a interdisciplinary perspective toward understanding the experiences of students of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Solórzano & Delgado, 2001). CRT has been an important and insightful tool used to analyze such varied issues such as the experiences of scholars of color in the academy, affirmative action, educational history, families of color, curriculum differentiation, and testing (Valencia, 2005).

The first tenet of CRT does recognize the intersection of other forms of subordination such as sexism, classism, and heterosexism. However, my review of CRT literature revealed these other forms of subordination are not defined in the first tenet. Furthermore, CRT discourse typically does not thoroughly address issues pertaining to gender, sexism, sexuality, and heterosexism in the published academic papers I reviewed. To be fair, a related framework to CRT known as Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) does address other forms of oppression that are germane to Latinos (e.g. language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype and sexuality). However, the intersection of these concepts is not fleshed out in the literature and sexuality tends to be sidelined in lieu of other more visible concepts such as race, phenotype, and language. I visit queer theory for a thorough discussion of using sexuality and gender as a lens to frame studies.

Act III: Queer Theory

It is difficult to clearly define queer theory because the very nature of the framework purports a fluid definition. A review of the literature revealed that queer theory is a byproduct of the gender and gay/lesbian studies movement emerging toward the end of the 1960s. Yet the use

of the term “queer theory” does not appear in the literature until the early part of the 1990s. In its simplest definition, queer theory offers a critique of heteronormativity and challenges traditional constructs of gender and sexual orientation that are produced using a hetero/homobinary discourse. Curran (2006) refers to queer theory as a framework that has emerged from and largely transformed the field of lesbian and gay studies, is informed by a poststructuralist understanding of identity, power, knowledge, and desire, in accordance with the influential work on these issues by Foucault. A queer theory in education also promotes a queer pedagogy, which challenges conventional understanding and practices with regard to teaching about diversity or social justice issues.

According to Luhmann (1998), queer theories refuse to see gay sexualities as purely marginal or even repressed by an overbearing stable heterosexuality and instead, queer theorists insist that the homo/hetero opposition is central to Western societies and constitutive of Western culture, modes of thinking, and concepts of the modern self. Luhmann further elaborates:

Queer aims to spoil and transgress coherent (and essential) gender configurations and the desire for a neat arrangement of dichotomous sexual and gendered difference, central to both heterosexual and homosexual identities, but beyond suggesting gender fluidity, queer theory also insists on the complications of the two: without gender, sexuality is nothing...Both queer theory and pedagogy argue that the process of making sense of selves relies on binaries such as homo-hetero, ignorance-knowledge, learner-teacher, reader-writer, and so on. Queer theory and pedagogy place at stake the desire to deconstruct binaries central to Western modes of meaning making, learning, teaching, and doing politics. Both desire to subvert the process of normalization. Thus queer theory and pedagogy, in difference to a repressive hypothesis of sexuality and power, suggest that the construction of the norm actually requires and depends on its abject other to become intelligible (p. 145 & 150).

This discussion of queer theory is reinforced by Rabiowitz’s own conceptualization of the framework. Rabiowitz (2002) argues that queer “represents, among other things, an aggressive impulse of generalization; it rejects a minoritizing logic of toleration or simply political interest-representation in favor of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal.” In sum, queer

theory incorporates a political dimension to the framework and also infuses a resistance strand that is at the core of the lens.

As a critique, queer theory lacks an assertive inclusion of race in its conceptualization. Although Rabiowitz does allude to race in her discussion when she observes the racialized other to be hypervisible, while the sexualized other may be invisible, she does not define the intersection of both concepts in her work. Subsequently, queer theorists marginalize race in their discourse because sexuality is at the forefront of their analyses. Similarly, critical race theorists marginalize gender and sexuality because race and racism is at the center of their framework. As a result of these limitations, I argue that a new framework is needed to better understand the complexity and intersectionality of race, racism, gender, sexism, sexuality, and heterosexism takes within one cohesive framework. I turn to *Jotería* for a framework that adopts this as an intersection and for appropriate use in the design of this dissertation.

Act IV: Toward a Teoría de Jotería en Educación

A *Jotería* perspective is aptly needed due to the limitations of CRT and QT to account for an intersectional lens to interpret social and educational topics of inquiry in a queer Latina/o context. The use of the Spanish term, *Jotería* as articulated by the discussion on its etymology, is favored over the English approximation of Queer Latino Critical Race Theory because the word *Jotería* accurately captures the intersection of three aforementioned social constructs and their respective systems of power and oppression. *Jotería* as theory is first and foremost informed by the perspective that race, gender and sexuality are at the center AND intersection of this particular lens. Additionally, the related concepts of racism, sexism and heterosexism also intersect and play a role in structuring oppressive educational practices. A *Jotería* perspective

draws attention to the often visible constructs of race and gender, but also recognizes that sexuality tends to be invisible and as a result marginalized in traditional education discourse. *Jotería* brings sexuality to the forefront and acknowledges that it intersects with race and gender, while simultaneously acknowledging that it is inclusive of intersex, transgender and related social locations. Lastly, a *Jotería* lens recognizes that racism, sexism and heterosexism work simultaneously with one another and ultimately serve to uphold white heteronormative supremacy via individual, institutional, and cultural forms of discrimination.

Finally, I place *Jotería* in a context of *educación* rather than the English translation of “education” because the framework is intended as a lens to examine issues from a Queer Latina/o perspective. Subsequently, it makes sense to use the framework in the culturally specific concept that is evoked by the term *Educación*. To expand on my earlier footnoted definition of *Educación*, I turn to Reese’s (1995) explanation of the difference between *Educación* versus education:

On the surface, *educación* appears to be a direct translation of the English word “education.” Although they are related etymologically, the Spanish term carries with it a set of inferences and behaviors that are not referents of its English cognate. *Educación* refers to a holistic approach of educating a child, inclusive of moral development, family upbringing, and having high aspirations for achievement. [It is] as a blending of academic and moral development...*Educación* has a broader meaning, the term invokes additional nonacademic dimensions, such as learning the difference between right and wrong, respect for parents and others, and correct behavior, which parents view as the base upon which all other learning lies. It also embeds the value in the importance of the family unit (p. 59 & 66).

As a result of this differentiation between *educación* and education, a *Teoría de Jotería* is best suited for use in *educación* since it is more inclusive of a Latina/o cultural context.

Curtain Call: Jotería as Theory in My Study

The framework I discuss in this chapter intends to forefront my ability to make sense of the social world through the lens I equip as a gay Xicano man. As evidenced through the myriad of scholars I referenced, I am not alone in using lived experience as a member of a historically marginalized group as a form of theory. As discussed earlier, Freire referred to it as “reading the world”, Anzaldúa named it *La Facultad*, and Dolores-Bernal firmly argued that this “cultural intuition” can be used as a form of theory and methodology.

In a similar fashion, *Jotería* as a theoretical framework positions my own version of cultural intuition as a way to bridge theory with method. For example, the semi-structured interview protocol I employed was designed with a *Jotería* perspective in mind. The protocol itself will be discussed in greater detail in the proceeding chapter that documents the methodology I employed in this dissertation. My main point here though, is that the questions from my interviews were framed using a *Jotería* perspective. In other words, *Jotería* informed my interview protocol as is evident by the references to racism, sexism, and heterosexism in some of the questions. *Jotería* also allowed me investigate themes in my research that otherwise would have potentially been ignored if another framework were used. An example of such a theme is “masculinity”. Pilot work done on researching the educational experiences of Latino military veterans revealed that a motivating factor for joining the military was to further develop character traits deemed masculine. A non-*Jotería* framework runs the risk of coding such a theme as “discipline” but *Jotería* recognizes the concept of “discipline” as one that needs to be unpackaged by reframing it as a byproduct of gender performance.

Finally, as I raise the metaphorical curtain call as it relates to the discussion of the theoretical framework used in this study, I raise one more salient note with regards to *Teoría de*

Jotería. As a theory that can be used to “read the world” from a perspective accounting for a complicated set of intersections, the lens can be used to help answer questions whose answers have traditionally been rendered invisible. I helped answer questions in my academic journey to understand the educational experiences of Latino military veterans. As my findings will illustrate in chapters 4 through 6, the analytic strength of this lens rests with issues and perspectives that have long been silenced.

Military Sociology

Overview

A critical review of the body of work related to my topic of inquiry revealed some insightful themes I would like to flesh out in this second section. These themes helped me understand what is already known about the military as it pertains to relevant issues connected to my dissertation topic such as enlistment patterns, the GI Bill, and motivating factors for joining. To begin with, I learned that much of the academic scholarship written on the topic of the military is actually framed around a sub-discipline referred to as “military sociology.” This sub-discipline is often studied using preferred quantitative methodologies and discourse surrounding military sociology is regularly featured in academic journals affiliated with the military. For example, a popular journal titled *Armed Forces and Society*, is very telling of the more conservative-oriented and pro-military frame used to discuss social science findings in the studies that this journal publishes.

The field of military sociology is also very heavily influenced by a long-standing, yet in my critical opinion, an outdated model used to understand what motivates individuals to join the military. The framework, referred to as Mosko’s Institutional and Occupational Models, will be

discussed and problematized in greater detail later in this section, but it is suffice to say for now that the model does not take into account a Latina/o cultural context for understanding motivational factors for this particular community. In the sections that follow, I will review select articles that help paint the landscape of the field of military sociology as it relates to the over-arching goal of this dissertation: to understand the identities and educational experiences of Latino military veterans.

Military Enlistment and Attrition

A study by Antel, Hosek, and Peterson (1987), is important because it draws attention to education expectations as an important factor in influencing military enlistment. An analysis of two concurrent 1979 surveys, the Department of Defense (DoD) Survey of Personnel Entering the Military (used for enlistees, N = 4,718) and the National Longitudinal Study of Labor Market Behavior Youth Survey (used for non-enlistees, N = 1,129), was conducted to yield results for this study. Theoretical discussions regarding military service refer to military enlistment as an alternative to further schooling or work, but research findings also indicate that education benefits resulting from the GI Bill actually work as motivational factors for recruits to actually enlist in the military. Furthermore, findings indicate that those who enlist in the military and are motivated by educational benefits are less likely to attrite.

Data also indicate a negative relationship between enlistment and an individual's academic ability, educational finances, and employment opportunities. Among all enlistees, attrition is a half to a third lower for those expecting more education. In other words, an enlistee is less likely to attrite if he wants to pursue more education. Therefore, a desire for education helps keep enlistees in the military. Of particular importance is the finding that "persons who

expect more education, have a stable employment history, and are willing to wait to get the job they want are nearly three times less likely to leave [the military early before their term expires]” (p. viii).

According to one hypothesis used by this study, military enlistment occurs if the expected utility exceeds that of schooling and work. Framing the hypothesis in this manner essentially narrows post-secondary education options into three possible routes: 1) military, 2) higher education, or 3) employment. These options align with the post-secondary routes I identified in the problem statement section of the introductory chapter. Findings from the study support the hypothesis and specifically “find support for the notion that a young man’s willingness to enlist is negatively related to his academic ability, ability to finance education, and his employment opportunities” (p. 23). Other key findings include:

- Blacks are more likely to enlist, perhaps because they perceive less discrimination and thus greater opportunity in the military.
- Latinos are no more likely to enlist than non-black, non-Latinos.
- Black and Latino graduates are no more likely than whites to attrite and thus race does not appear to be a major factor explaining attrition.
- Education expectations plays a prominent role in both enlistment and attrition.
- Enlistment prospects who are prone to attrition include persons who typically do not expect more education, have poorly articulated occupational objectives, and unstable employment.
- 2 out of 5 enlist as seniors and the vast majority enlist as non-students
- Though the data did not test for it, it is probably true that educational benefits draw primarily young men who expect to obtain more education and have difficulty financing it. If so, educational benefits serve to attract enlistees having a lower probability of attrition (p. 44).

This study is critical to the corpus of work documenting the role of education benefits in the decision making process to enlist in the military. Findings indicate that education expectations help explain how and why educational benefits act as effective incentives. First, they expand the recruiting market to include more persons who are education-oriented, and second, persons from that segment of the market are more likely to complete their terms.

The study is not without its limitations. The study itself is rather out-dated and relies on data that is almost ten years older than the date the study was published. Though some of the findings were disaggregated for racial groups, the study can stem to benefit from further disaggregation of race for some its statistics. Thus, a more contemporary study featuring a CRT analysis would be beneficial to a study of this nature.

Public Opinion on the Military

Findings from a 1999 national survey indicate that Latinos are the most supportive of military enlistment. Leal (1999) examined survey results from Latino, African American and white respondents who were questioned on various opinions on the military. The total sample size was 4,614 respondents and is further disaggregated into the following racial constituencies: 1) Latinos (n = 2,417), 2) African Americans (n = 285), and 3) whites (n = 1,802). Of particular importance, 49% of the Latino respondents were interviewed in Spanish and thus, captures a Latino demographic that is more representative of socio-economic status for the Latino population. Most relevant to my dissertation is the finding that Latinos are more likely than whites to encourage youth to enlist. This major finding has significant implications due to the changing demographics of the US that indicate a growing population of Latinos and a declining share of the white population.

Background information from this article revealed Latinos have particularly positive attitudes toward enlistment in the armed forces stemming from the half-million Latino soldiers who served in World War II and returned from the war with an inclination to overcome barriers to fully participate politically and economically in US society. This socialization process, or rather American acculturation process, has been realized as a trend within the African American

population as well. Moskos and Butler (1996) note within this article, “At a time when Afro-American were still arguing for their educational rights before the Supreme Court and marching for their social and political rights in the Deep South, the army had become desegregated with little fanfare.” The military also serves as a “bridging environment” that allows veterans of Color to better integrate into civilian society. Specific results from this study include:

- Latinos (61%) are the most supportive of military enlistment, followed by whites (58%) and African Americans (51%). This finding suggests that does not need to worry about the changing demography of the US since Latinos have an overall supportive opinion of enlistment.
- 89% of whites have a favorable evaluation of the military, followed by 77% of Latinos, and 72% of African Americans
- When disaggregating the Latino classification into ethnic groups, findings indicate that all subgroups are more supportive of military enlistment than whites. The actual percentages for each group include: 1) Puerto Ricans (64%), 2) Central and South Americans (65%), 3) Cuban Americans (69%), and 5) Mexican Americans (66%).

Conclusions from the study revealed Latinos may recognize that the military provides employment opportunities for youth.

History of the GI Bill

I found Stanley’s (2003) evaluation of the effects of the World War II and Korean War GI Bills on postsecondary education attainment to be particularly useful in understanding the impact of both these pieces of legislation. This historical knowledge is useful because the GI Bill and education benefits are topics of discussion in the semi-structured interviews I had with research participants. Gleaned from the study by Stanley (2003), findings indicate that the combination of bills increased total postsecondary attainment among all men born between 1921 and 1933 by about 15 to 20 percent. Stanley (2003) writes, “Observers have credited the GI Bill with playing a vital role in opening the doors of higher education to millions and helping to set the stage for the decades of widely shared prosperity that followed World War II” (p. 671).

The first GI Bill was passed toward the end of WWII in 1944 and was intended to assist returning veterans in funding higher education. Stanley's (2003) historical analysis reveals the bill was originally envisaged as a limited program to allow veterans whose education had been interrupted by the war to continue their education, but the bill that was actually passed ended up being much broader in scope. The response to the bill was overwhelming given that 7.8 million of the 15.3 million WWII veterans drew on the educational benefits of the GI Bill. However, this number is a bit misleading because only 35% of the 15.3 million used the educational benefits to fund higher education whereas the remaining portion utilized the funds to cover in proprietary or vocational schools.

The Korean War GI Bill was passed in 1952 and once again realized a strong response by 2 million out of the 5.3 million Korean War veterans who drew on the educational benefits. Approximately one million veterans used it for higher education. Though there were some differences in the details of the GI Bill benefits, essentially the educational benefits covered tuition and living expenses. According to Stanley (2003), traditional accounts of history cite the World War II GI Bill as the major cause of higher education enrollment growth immediately following the conclusion of the war. Statistics show that college enrollment was 70 percent higher than its prewar level. However, a more critical perspective of this view by Stanley (2003) finds that "large numbers of returning male veterans would have caused an enrollment surge in any case and there was very rapid preexisting growth in higher education before WWII" (p. 677).

Mosko's Institutional and Occupational Models

Research pertaining to studies of motivational factors helping to determine why individuals enlist in the military have been historically framed using a conceptual tool known as

Mosko's Institutional and Occupational Models (Woodruff & Kelty, 2006). These two models maintain that motivational factors for serving in the military can be neatly separated into two distinct determinants:

- 1) Institutional: refers to intrinsic motivational factors such as altruistic motives "expressed in terms of duty, service, and patriotism" (p. 355). Other set of motivations that fall under this category include a desire for self-improvement, adventure and a rite of passage associated with military service.
- 2) Occupational: refers to extrinsic motivational factors that are expressed in terms of pay, benefits, enlistment bonus, money for college, personal crises, and lack of other employment options.

I argue these two models are problematic in that there are motivational factors that fall outside of simplistic characterizations as "institutional" and "occupational." The determinants for institutional essentially implies intrinsic motivational factors while the determinants for occupational imply extrinsic motivational factors. For the sake of my argument, consider a military recruit who is motivated to join the military because of aspirations to use GI Bill benefits to further his education. Arguably, a desire for advanced education does not fall completely within the boundaries of an institutional or occupational model. Subsequently, this is one of the limitations of military sociology discourse as it pertains to motivation for enlistment.

Woodruff and Kelty's (2006) quantitative study of propensity to serve and motivation to enlist in the military also suggests that Mosko's institutional and occupational models are too simplistic. Their study examined 257 survey responses from male army soldiers to determine the relationship between propensity to serve in the military while in high school with actual military service. Propensity was measured retrospectively by asking respondents to indicate aspirations during their time at the latter end of high school. A retrospective analysis makes this research unique because most studies of this nature survey high school students to measure their propensity and follow up these measurements to correlate them with actual military enlistment.

Results from the study indicate four main trends: 1) the majority of army recruits are comprised of low-propensity soldiers, 2) the traditional models that have framed military sociology do not capture the complexity of motivations to serve, 3) High-propensity soldiers are strongly influenced by patriotic motives and by their plans for the future, some of which include military careers, and 4) Low propensity soldiers are more responsive to occupational and pecuniary motivations. The second finding in particular reinforces my critical evaluation of the Mosko models.

Study outcomes also show some soldiers are motivated by factors that are future-oriented, specifically a desire to be a career soldier and a desire to receive money for college. However, these two motivational factors are mutually exclusive from one another. Respondents who indicated they were motivated by a career in the military were not likely to indicate being motivated by money to attend college. In contrast, respondents who indicated they were motivated to enlist in the military due to educational benefits were also not likely to be motivated by a career in the military. In other words, “educational benefits motivate people to enlist but also leave the service once the benefits have been earned” (p. 360). This finding suggests that money for school cannot be easily categorized as either an institutional or occupational motivation and thus, a new paradigm to approach this research is needed to underscore the complexity of propensity findings. Other insightful findings from the study worth noting include:

- High school seniors who expressed high propensity to enlist have an actual enlistment rate 24 times higher than those who expressed a negative enlistment intention.
- Propensity has been shown to be highest among males, African Americans, Latinos, and those looking for additional skill training outside school.
- 70% of male high school seniors who express a high desire for service actually enlist in the military within six years of high school graduation.
- Propensity of American youth to serve in the military has declined for the past two decades and this is marked by a particularly sharp decrease in propensity for service among African Americans.

- Factors that have influenced this overall drop in propensity includes changes in economic conditions, educational opportunities, and active wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The literature review shared in this second part of the chapter demonstrates there is a dearth of knowledge pertaining to work in military sociology that uses an intersectional theoretical framework as a basis for data analysis. Likewise, there is a paucity of scholarship in military sociology using qualitative methodology for research design. My dissertation bridges the gap in literature and I know turn to a discussion in the next chapter on the concrete methodological steps I employed fill such a gap in the literature.

Chapter 3

Methodology: The Intersection of *Jotería*, Portraiture, and Theoretical Sampling

The portrait, then, creates a narrative that is once complex, provocative, and inviting, that attempts to be holistic, revealing the dynamic interaction of values, personality, structure, and history. And the narrative documents human behavior and experience in context. In fact, the portraitist insists that the only way to interpret people's actions, perspectives, and talk is to see them in context.

– Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot, “A View of the Whole”
in *The Art and Science of Portraiture*

This dissertation primarily used a qualitative methodological approach toward eliciting answers to the central research questions. However, the first research question lent itself to a more quantitative approach for addressing the query and subsequently, I address the methods specific to the first research question in greater detail in the next chapter. While writing about my overall approach, I keep Sandra Harding's insightful remarks regarding the distinction between methods and methodology as the backbone guiding my discussion of this study's research design. In her remarks, Harding states, “a research methodology is a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed... [whereas] a research method is a technique for gathering evidence” (Harding, 1987, pp. 2-3). This sharp contrast between methodology and method is further captured by Linda Tuhiwai Smith's insightful critique of traditional methodologies. In favor of more indigenous methodologies that privilege the voice of the marginalized, she writes, “Methodology is important because it frames the questions being asked, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed and shapes the analyses” (Smith, 1999, p. 143).

As a roadmap for this chapter, I will briefly provide an overview of the main sections. The first section re-introduces my central research questions as a reminder helping to guide the discussion of my methods. The second section articulates my rationale and use of portraiture as my overall research design for this study. The third section discusses my selection of

participants, including how I drew from theoretical sampling techniques and bridge them with portraiture. Data collection and analysis will also be shared in this section. The fourth section shares general demographic information as a way to provide context on Orange County High School (OCHS), the high school that all proposed study participants graduated from. Throughout these aforementioned sections, I pepper *Jotería* as part of the discussion, resulting in an overall research design intersecting theory with portraiture and theoretical sampling. Finally, concluding remarks on my methodology will be shared at the end of this chapter as a way to cement the intersection.

Research Questions

Though articulated in the first chapter, a brief recap of the research questions, sans rationale statements, is in order as a way to provide guides for the fruition of the methodology. In other words, the framing of the research questions directly inform the design of this proposed study. By analogous extension, the research questions frame this study, while the theoretical framework serves as my brush, and finally the methodology stands to form the final portrait for my research. The informants for my study were drawn from a population of Latino military veterans who attended the same high school in Orange County, CA during the mid-90s. As a reminder, the mid-90s was chosen at the time period of enrollment for these former high school students due to the over-whelming presence of a military recruitment culture at the school.

Consequently, I relist the research questions as follows:

- 1) As a way to understand the military recruitment pipeline for Latina/os, what are the recruitment rates for this group? ¹²
- 2) How does the life story of a Latino military veteran who graduated from an Orange County high school in the mid-90s shape his post-secondary academic trajectory?

¹² As a reminder, the intent of the first research question is to create a military pipeline for both Latinas and Latinos in the military. However, the focus of inquiry for the second and third research questions is Latino males.

3) How does identity influence the educational experiences of Latino military veterans?

Indeed, the frame that metaphorically surrounds these research questions reflects the multiple methodological approaches that I draw from as an indigenous researcher who is aware of my cultural intuition.¹³ I regard myself as an indigenous researcher due to my consciousness as a Xicano scholar; a standpoint that acknowledges my indigenous roots. This particular standpoint plays a role in the shaping of my methodology.

Portraiture

At the expense of using a cliché, it is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words. The Spanish equivalent of this common adage however, translates into *una imagen vale más que mil palabras*. When translated back into English using a literal approach, the Spanish equivalent of the cliché actually states that an image is worth MORE than a thousand words. The qualitative methodology encompassed by portraiture as method, certainly underscores the inherent value and power of using descriptive words to paint a composite picture of the life stories for participants interviewed with this method in mind. Though the literature-base for portraiture as method is limited (Chapman, 2007), it appeals to my preferred writing style.

During a discussion with my Chair, Dr. Daniel Solórzano, I expressed frustration with the writing process when I was at the dissertation proposal stage. I particularly expressed concern over the manner in which the academy had stifled my creative writing spirit. To often, academia erects boxes that shape the writer as opposed to the writer shaping such boxes. As a Xicano who grew up reading such influential novels like *Rain of Gold*, *Always Running*, *Like Water for*

¹³ Dolores Delgado Bernal refers to cultural intuition as a perspective and complex process in which the researcher uses personal experience, collective experience, and community memory to give meaning to data. This concept is further referenced and elaborated on in my theoretical framework chapter of this dissertation proposal. See chapter 2.

Chocolate and *Little House on Mango Street*, I gravitated more toward this type of writing – writing that allows me to live through the sizzling words penned on paper.

Dr. Solórzano certainly heard my frustrations and responded by recommending I delve into Lawrence-Lightfoot's portraiture methodology as a way to re-ignite the creative flair echoed in the type of writing that once flourished through the tap-tap-tap of my typing. Upon reading the following excerpt from Davis and Lightfoot's (1997) work, I knew I had found a marriage partner that would breathe new life into my writing:

I wanted to develop a document, a text that came as close as possible to painting with words. I wanted to create a narrative that bridged the realms of science and art, merging the systematic and careful description of good ethnography with the evocative resonance of fine literature (p. 4).

Reading these two simple yet suggestive lines allowed me to bridge two writing worlds that I have long struggled to connect with one another; the words of a poet with the words of a social scientist. It was a light bulb moment for me in my development as both a writer and academic; it rendered artistic freedom yet maintained the scientific rigor of the social sciences. It unleashed me from the cellblock that had been placed by the suffocating halls of the ivory tower. In other words, I could write again and my writing would have meaning and be accessible to the people that inspire my work. More often than not, discourse in academic writing is laden with language that is specific to the discipline. This language can be off-putting to the layperson. I want to avoid alienating readers of my work by infusing it with a lyrical quality that makes literature much more inviting to read as opposed to the dry tone that academic writing is too often known for outside of the academy, or, as my Chair humorously puts it – too dissertationy. Though I must admit it is a rather challenging task to consistently convey an academic oriented message using syntax more apt for a novel and subsequently, I routinely vacillate between the two voices throughout the writing of this work.

In response to the historical figures who inspired her creation of portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) write, “I was not only inspired by this long legacy, but also by my resistance to many of the dominant canons and preoccupations with social science. I was concerned, for example, about the general tendency of social scientists to focus their investigations on pathology and disease rather than on health and resilience” (p. 8). This statement effectively conveys Lawrence-Lightfoot’s preference for capturing a concept she refers to as *goodness*, an asset based approach, in her portraits. Referencing a more asset oriented methodology is very much compatible with my theoretical framework when considering the origins of a *Jotería* perspective, an offshoot of CRT, which encompasses a tenet that challenges deficit thinking and has been used by Yosso (2005) to conceptualize another related asset based framework known as community cultural wealth. In other words, the theoretical framework and methodology for this dissertation proposal work in concert with one another.

The over-arching goal of portraiture methodology is to create an aesthetic whole narrative. To do so, the researcher, who is referred to as the portraitist, must follow a strict sequence of methods that Davis and Lightfoot (1997) articulate as:

1. Collect her data;
2. Organize and analyze her data;
3. Reflect on the data collected;
4. Look for emergent themes;
5. Sort, group and classify data:

At a superficial glance, it seems as these steps follow a general qualitative methodology but embedded in portraiture is the use of various dimensions of voice for the researcher. Within the context of portraiture, voice can be somewhat messy to define but it encompasses three orientation – epistemology, ideology, and method – but also includes others such as reflecting the portraitist’s explicit interest in authorship, interpretation, relationship, aesthetics, and

narrative (Davis and Lightfoot, 1997). Essentially, this concept of voice acknowledges that the final product, the narratives of the research participants, will be in part shaped by a strategic set of dimensions of voice that Davis and Lightfoot (1997) delineate across six areas: 1) voice as witness, 2) voice as interpretation, 3) voice as preoccupation, 4) voice as autobiography, 5) listening for voice, and 6) voice in conversation. Each dimension of voice is positioned in a sequence that represents the degree of presence and visibility of the researcher. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) frame this relationship between voices as “moving from the most restrained form of voice as witness, vigilantly listening and observing, to voice in dialogue, creating the story with the actors” (p. 87).

Selection of Participants

Participants for this proposed study were selected based on several criteria. The principal common denominator for all participants is that they all needed to be graduates of a school I refer to using the pseudonym, Orange County High School (OCHS). Specifically, participants need to have graduated from OCHS in or between the class years of 1994 – 1997. The specificity of both the high school graduation and class year requirements is to keep in line with the overarching goal of this research study, which is to critically examine the educational experiences of military veterans who graduated from a high school with a military culture. Additional criteria for research participants were as follows: 1) must self-identify as Latino, 2) must identify as male, 3) made decision to enlist in the military while in high school or within one year of high school graduation (related to this criteria is the participant must have followed through on this decision and started military service within one year of high school graduation), 4) enrolled in

some type of higher education program while in and/or completion of military service (this can include vocational and/or proprietary schools).

Data Collection and Analysis

Due to the robust nature of the qualitative-based portraiture approach being used to elicit data from the participants, two sampling methods were used to generate theory and findings for this study. I drew from purposeful sampling and theoretical sampling techniques as a way to arrive at my theory-building via analytic induction. Purposeful sampling allows for the selection of particular subjects for inclusion in a study because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of a developing theory (Bogdon, R., & Bilken, S., 2007). I used a list of potential research participants to draw from for a purposeful sampling. However, I did not want to ignore any potential research participants that I came across due to referrals from my original participant list. Subsequently, using theoretical sampling I commenced my research with a sample of one based on the first selection from my participant list and interviewed him using a semi-structured format. An interview protocol is provided for reference under Appendix A of this dissertation. The interview protocol was framed using the theoretical framework of *Jotería* to flesh out questions pertaining to race, racism, gender, sexism, sexuality, and heterosexism. I then proceeded to seek out further participants based on the outcome of the first interview. This process then repeated itself until data saturation was reached. According to Draucker, Martsolf, Ross, and Rusk (2007), “Theoretical sampling means that the sampling of additional incidents, events, activities, populations, and so on is directed by the evolving theoretical constructs” (p. 1137).

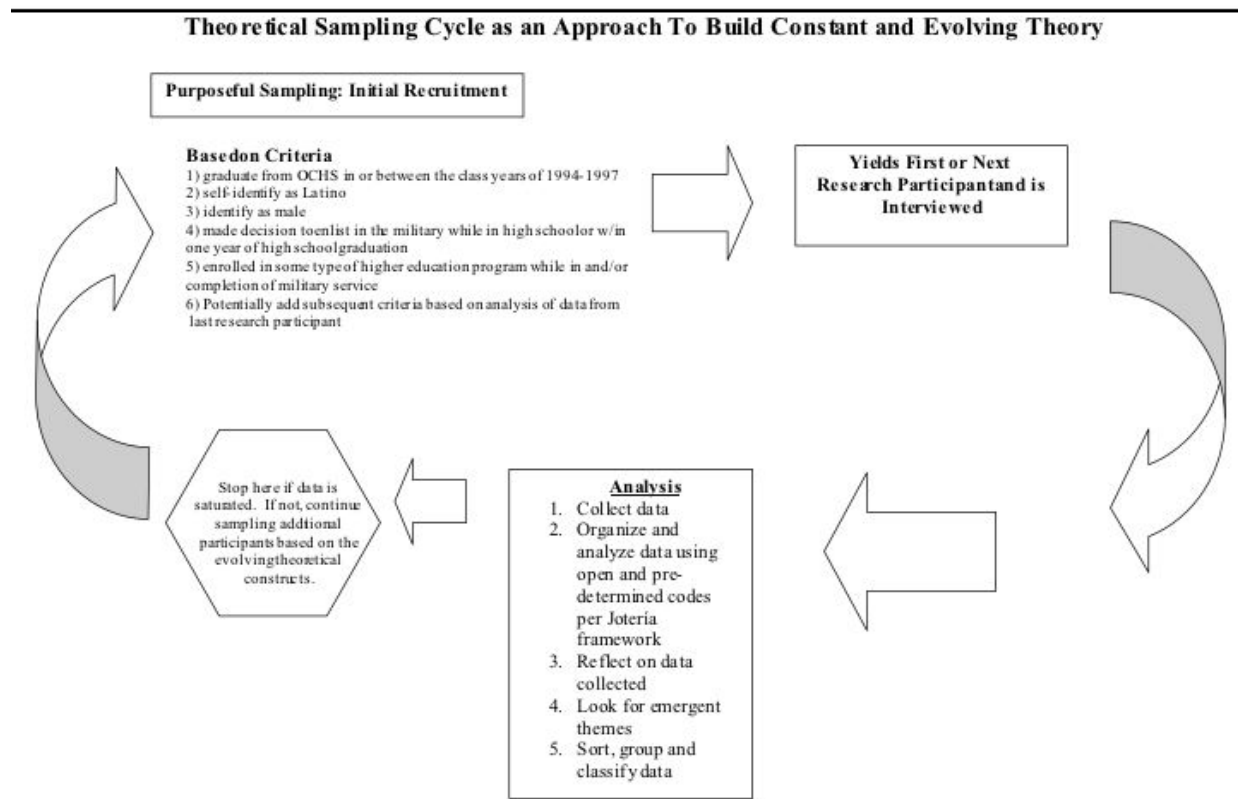
Based on a grounded theory approach, the idea behind employing a theoretical sampling method is that each new participant yielded information that helped me arrive at a final sample number once I reached data saturation. In her work Coyne (1997) critically examines purposeful and theoretical sampling terminology and states, “The central focus of grounded theory is the development of theory through constant comparative analysis of data gained from theoretical sampling” (p. 625). Using this technique helped me obtain a deep understanding of the landscape for the topic that I am studying. Purposeful and theoretical sampling are all considered analytic induction approaches. As found in Bogdan and Biklen’s (2007) work in *Qualitative Research for Education*, the conceptual backbone for theoretical sampling is as follows:

1. Early in the research, a rough definition and explanation of the particular social phenomenon is developed.
2. The definition and explanation is held up to the data as they are collected.
3. The definition and explanation is modified as new cases are encountered that do not fit with the definition and explanation as formulated.
4. New cases are sought that may not fit into the formulation
5. The social phenomenon is redefined and the explanation is reformulated until a universal relationship is established (p. 73)

The following diagram labeled Figure 3.1, depicts the aforementioned description of my sampling method, data analysis, and theory building in a visual process I refer to as the theoretical sampling cycle as an approach to build constant and evolving theory.¹⁴

¹⁴ A larger version of figure 3.1, the theoretical sampling cycle, is provided as Appendix B.

Figure 3.1: Theoretical Sampling Cycle



It is important to note that the descriptor “military veteran” included participants who served as a reservist in the military. This is important to point out because the study benefited from insight provided from participants who could not be classified neatly into prescribed parameters, yet theoretical sampling allowed for them to be included in the study.

It is also important to note that participants who identified as “military veterans” could have potentially included participants from any of the branches of the military: 1) Air Force, 2) Army, 3) Coast Guard, 4) Marine Corps, or 5) Navy. However, as my findings will illustrate, the majority of my participants opted to enlist in the Marines due to the perception that this branch is the most challenging. The discourse surrounding the perception that joining the Marine Corps as

the most challenging branch of the military usually concerned itself with discussions of masculinity and discipline.

That is not to suggest that participants who served in other branches of the military were turned away from interviews. On the contrary, I was successful in including a participant who served in the Navy. Historically and organizationally relevant to note is that administratively, the Marine Corps is organized under the auspices of the US Department of the Navy since 1834 (navy.mil, 2015). As a critical researcher, it is important to forefront this note on my participants to begin to understand reasons why one branch of the military is favored over another branch. My intimate connection to the research site as articulated in the dissertation introductory chapter also gives me a pool of knowledge to draw from and it is this knowledge-base that also assists me frame this study. I am not alone in thinking that a type of cultural knowledge-base can assist in the research process. In fact, Malagón, Pérez Huber, and Vélez (2009) argue that a “process of ‘cultural intuition’ is instrumental in engaging the multiple sources of knowledge a researcher brings to her work and which necessarily becomes part of the theory building that occurs in a crucial race-grounded theory approach” (p. 254). The work of these scholars speaks to the importance and value that my standpoint as a gay Xicano researcher who is connected to the community I am researching has in deriving theory from my data. It also speaks to the strong connection between the theoretical framework of this dissertation proposal, *Jotería*, and the architecture of the methods¹⁵ employed in the design of this study.

¹⁵ My analysis also included extensive use of the software, NVIVO. Such software proved to be a saving grace during the data analysis phase of the study due to the sheer volume of transcripts, codes, and themes I unearthed during this process. If you are a graduate student reading this dissertation and come across this footnote, make your life easier by using qualitative analysis software. You can still have fun highlighting and get “messy” with the data as you spread out transcripts on the floor, but I highly recommend you get a student subscription to your preferred qualitative analysis tool. It was the best \$99 I invested as a part of my study and I self-taught myself via Youtube.

Site Description

This study did not utilize a research site in the traditional manner because no data collection took place at a location universal to all participants. However, a description of OCHS is still needed because all research participants were graduates of this particular school for the reasons outlined in the introduction of this dissertation. As a result, demographic context is needed to situate this research within the broader high school context where the research participants all attended. With the exception of one participant, participants graduated in the mid-90s, and accordingly, I use the 1994-95 academic year to illustrate demographic data, graduation statistics, and information pertaining to graduates who met University of California (UC) and/or California State University (CSU) entrance requirements. These statistics help paint a composite sketch for OCHS. All of the data under this section is based on information obtained from the Educational Demographics Office of the California Department of Education using their on-line database.

During the 1994-1995 academic year, OCHS accounted for a total school population of 2,893 students. When disaggregated for race, 8.8% constituted Asian and/or Pacific Islander students, 86.4% Latina/o students, 3% African American students, and 1.8% White students. The four-year dropout rate for the school was calculated at 23% for the entire school, but the rate looks sharply different for some racial groups. Most contrastingly, was the remarkable difference between the four-year dropout rate between White and Latina/o students. Whereas the dropout rate for Whites stood at 0% that year, the dropout rate for Latina/os stood at 24.7%. For a closer analysis, the following chart identified as Table 3.1 depicts the raw numbers and corresponding percentages:

Table 3.1: Orange County High School Dropout Rate by Racial Group (1994-1995)

Race	Total Enroll	Total Enroll %	4 Yr Dropout Rate
Asian/PI	255	8.8	8.4%
Latina/o	2,499	86.4	24.7%
African Am.	88	3	17.8%
White	51	1.8	0%
School Total	2,893	100	22.6%

4-Year Dropout Formula: $(1 - ((\text{drop gr 9}/\text{enroll gr 9})) * (1 - (\text{drop gr 10}/\text{enroll gr 10})) * (1 - \text{drop gr 11}/\text{enroll gr 11})) * (\text{drop gr 12}/\text{enroll gr 12})) * 100$

Note: I purposefully omitted individual grade level data from the chart in order to simplify it, but I still felt it was important to explain the dropout formula in order to understand how the rates were derived.

Data for the school district revealed the four-year dropout rate to be at 19.6% for the 1994-1995 academic year. The county four-year dropout rate is significantly lower at 10.7% while the state-wide rate stood at 17.1% for the same academic year. Clearly, OCHS’s overall four-year dropout rate of 22.6% is higher than district, county, and state rates.

In the particular 1994-1995 academic year, 459 students were enrolled in the 12th grade. Of these 459 students, 414 graduated at the end of the school year. It is important to shed further light on the 414 students who graduated by examining how many of these students graduated having completed all courses required for admission to the University of California (UC) and/or California State University systems. Note that the data available via the on-line Educational Demographics Office of the California Department of Education aggregates the descriptor referred to as “UC and/or CSU Required Courses” as one category as opposed to separating it into two distinct categories. Nonetheless the data is still insightful since it underscores the overall low number of students who graduated having completed courses required for admission into the UC and or CSU systems. Only 17.6% of students graduated with UC/CSU required courses, a number that is very telling of the lack of a college going culture within OCHS. The following

Table 3.2 further elaborates on the statistics for graduates with UCS/CSU courses completed when disaggregated for race:

Table 3.2: Orange County High School 12th Grade Graduates Completing All Courses Required for UC and/or CSU Entrance by Racial Group (1994-1995)

Race	Grads	Grads with UC/CSU Req Courses	% Grads with UC/CSU Req Courses
Asian/PI	40	14	35
Latina/o	347	47	13.5
African Amer.	16	2	12.5
White	11	0	0
School Total	414	73	17.6

School district data for that same school year indicates that 26% of all high school graduates in the district complete courses required for UC and/or CSU entrance. County data reveals that 35.9% of graduates met UC and/or CSU entrance coursework requirements during the 1994-1995 school year and 34.9% of all graduates in the state of California met this benchmark. Clearly, OCHS underperforms in this area when compared to district, county and state statistics.

Concluding Remarks

I started this chapter by referencing Harding’s discernment between methods and methodology. I now revisit those remarks by underscoring how such a discernment helped me to recognize the intimate connection that a set of research questions, theoretical framework, and methodology must have with one another in order for the study to work. The importance of having these three key areas of a dissertation connect with one another is akin to the value of having a pair of ballroom dancers jive well together on the dance floor. A pair of ballroom

dancers must be in step with one another, be in synch with the music, and be entertaining to an audience in order for their performance to work. A dissertation, though often not thought of as an artistic medium such as dance, also must ensure all components are in synch with another in order to yield findings that are robust and hold up to the methodology employed. I wrote this dissertation with the intent that the research questions, *Jotería* theory, theoretical sampling and portraiture methodology dance well together in order to yield findings that are worthy of impacting the fields of sociology and education. On that note, I turn to the next chapter to start a discussion on my findings.

Chapter 4 Who Goes to War? The Latino Military Recruitment Pipeline

Hi Martin,

This is Eduardo Lara, the professor you ran into at the gym. As I mentioned to you, my research focuses on the educational experiences of Latino military veterans and I teach Sociology at California State University Long Beach.

I routinely provide counseling to students interested in college and I have worked at several high schools in the past to provide information on applying to college. Coincidentally, I applied to work for LAPD over ten years ago because I studied Criminal Justice as an undergraduate and was offered employment. However, I opted to work in the field of education instead.

Feel free to schedule a meeting with me if you'd like to learn more about career paths that include getting your Bachelor's degree. I can also provide information on the military based on my research. I have an office in the Sociology Department at CSULB and available to meet Mondays and Wednesdays from 9 am to 5 pm. Feel free to forward this email to your friend, Brian. I also recommend that you bring your parent(s) and if language is a concern, know that I am fully bilingual in English and Spanish. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Take care,
-Eduardo Lara*

– Personal Email Correspondence, January 15, 2014

In a preliminary draft of this chapter, I scribbled a note on the margins expressing a need for an engaging way to begin this section of the dissertation. The draft at the time seemed too dry for my writing palate, clearly struggling to make a discussion on demographics appear lively. I conceded defeat to the writer's block the night before a draft was due, but found solace that the information conveyed, albeit dry, presented the necessary data to address a central research question for my study. As serendipity would have it, after a long day of writing at my favorite local coffee shop, my inspiration for commencing this chapter with the email reflected in the epigraph above came in the form of a lively exchange at the gym between me and two high school students who were contemplating enlisting in the Marine Corps.

Ironically, I went to the gym to take a pause from my writing and a much needed mental break from my dissertation topic. Toward the end of my workout, my ears perked up when I overheard two Latino youth entertain the idea of becoming Marines in hopes of parlaying the skills learned in the military into future careers in law enforcement. Recognizing and respecting the personal conversational space of these two adolescents, I initially opted not to contribute to their dialogue. However, a middle-aged white man failed to adhere to similar conventions of personal space and inserted himself into the private conversation between these two youths by chiming in with his two cents. Immediately following some tangential anti-immigrant remark the man advised, “Make sure you enlist in infantry because police departments love hiring former infantry. But remember, 90% of what police officers do is peace keeping, but the other 10% is ass kicking.”

Triggered by such misleading misinformation, I decided to counter the man’s comments by injecting my own, more critically informed contribution to the conversation. Interpreting the situation as a matter of social justice, I successfully interrupted and silenced the man from further making problematic remarks by introducing myself to the youth as a professor who does research on the educational experiences of Latino military veterans. Based on their responses from my probing, I quickly deduced that the high school students’ actual interests were to pursue college, but were using the military as a vehicle to reach their true academic aspirations. I asked one of the students to send me an email on his smart phone right there on the spot and promised to reply to him as soon as I got home. The epigraph that commences this chapter is the email I replied with and now use it as a reminder that the statistics this chapter shares tell a more nuanced story. Indeed, while demographics paint broad brushstrokes detailing the scope of military recruitment,

Martin's bout with recruitment into the military serves as a reminder of the depth associated with the breadth of the issue.

To showcase the breadth, it is quite common in educational research to use a pipeline as a metaphor to refer to the pathway students, such as Martin, travel en route to the baccalaureate degree and beyond. Indeed, researchers have used a pipeline to document pathways for Latino students such as the work of Perez-Huber, Huidor, Malagón, Sanchez, and Solórzano (2006) in their article, "Falling Through The Cracks." My interest in their work inspired the spirit of my first research question for this dissertation. Originally, during the proposal stage, the first research question posed: As a way to understand the educational landscape for Latina/o military veterans, what are the college pathways and post-secondary attainment rates for this group? The rationale for posing this question prior to delving into the more qualitative-oriented questions was to flesh out a qualitative analysis chronicling how this group navigates the military and higher education while underscoring obstacles encountered along the way. Such an analysis was intended for comparison with the educational narratives of the Chicano and Latino military veterans I interviewed. However, as tends to be the case with the data collection phase of the dissertation, data set availability and the trajectory of the study influenced me to reframe my research question.

Now, congruent with the data collected, the heart of the central inquiry addressed in this chapter is the research question: **Who goes to war?** Admittedly, this is a broad question meriting further context and specificity, yet I purposefully frame this chapter around this broad question because the educational experiences of Latino males, such as the experiences of Martin and Brian, are situated against a larger ecology that explores the intersection of war and education. This intersection needs to be teased out to further understand the demographic context under

which Latino males are recruited into the military. Subsequently, the line of inquiry underscored by such a broad question using the word, “who”, offers a salient cue that the answer will lead to a robust discussion of human beings, specifically young men and women, in the military as opposed to abstract demographics that omit connecting statistics to the faces of those who serve in the military. My decision to couch this chapter around who is recruited into the military is also a political choice meant to humanize the demographics through an unapologetic social justice lens. To briefly elaborate, the data set used to extrapolate demographics refers to military recruits as “accessions.”¹⁶ From a critical standpoint, the use of this term to refer to recruits obscures that we are discussing human beings, in particular Youth of Color. Again, I am reminded of Martin as a potential personification of an accession.

I also want to bring attention to my strategic use of the word “recruitment” in reference to the pipeline as opposed to using the word “enlistment” to describe the pathway of those who join the military. As a critical researcher informed by a social justice agenda, I took liberty to reframe what is commonly referred to as enlistment to describe the process of joining the military. The term enlistment inaccurately places onus on joining the military on the individual whereas recruitment more accurately shifts the onus to the institutions that impact the decision-making process for those who join the military. Later chapters will discuss the role of a school as an institution that impacts the decision by creating a recruitment environment. However, there will be times in this chapter when I do reference “recruitment” as “enlistment” or “join the military” to achieve fluidity and diversity in language.

In consultation with a *Jotería* theoretical framework, the over-arching research question

¹⁶ According to the “Population Representation in the Military Services: Fiscal Year 2010 Summary Report,” accessions are described as “those entering service.”

governed the crafting of a more specific query and more nuanced research sub-questions addressed by this chapter. The specific research question anchoring this chapter is: **As a way to understand the military recruitment pipeline for Latina/os, what are the recruitment rates for this group?** Keeping in mind that a *Jotería* perspective centers race, gender and sexuality, research sub-questions are as follows:

1. What are the recruitment demographics by race and gender for each military service branch of the military?
2. How do such recruitment demographics compare against 18-to-24 year old civilians?
3. What does a military recruitment pipeline analysis reveal about race and gender?

The sub-questions do not provide a query into gay and lesbian demographics because the data set used for analytical purposes in this chapter did not provide any information pertaining to the sexual orientation of military recruits. With the exception of sexual identity, research sub-questions still allowed me to probe into the racial and gendered landscape for military enlistment using data from the, “Fiscal Year 2010 Summary Report of Population Representation in the Military Services”.

In the following sections, I will provide context for understanding the purpose behind the Population Representation in the Military Services Fiscal Year 2010 Summary Report. I will then present figures illustrating the demographics followed by a discussion and analysis of the data. Such analysis will be provided using inter and intra-group comparisons for race and gender. Due to a *Jotería* framework and findings that implicate sharp gender inequalities, I will forefront a discussion of Latina and Black women in the military before delving into discussion on Latino males in the military. I then will connect how such data relates to my overall dissertation purpose: to understand the educational experiences of Latino military veterans.

Data Source Context and Methodology

After spending numerous hours attempting to arrive at demographic data for military recruitment using US Census Bureau data sources such as American FactFinder, it became clear that I needed to provide a more exhaustive search to arrive at reliable data that would yield a pipeline. Eventually, I came across the Population Representation in the Military Services Report (Pop Rep) and I settled on using the most recent data available in Fiscal Year 2010. According to the executive summary of the report, the goal of the information “is to provide the most up-to-date, reliable, and consistent data on military personnel for policy-makers, the media, and the general public.” This report is provided by the Office of the Undersecretary for Personnel and Readiness, a sub-division of the Department of Defense that is charged with the task to develop policies to ensure the readiness of the US military.

As alluded to in an earlier section of this chapter, reference to recruitment numbers are framed as accession numbers, but my presentation, discussion and analysis of these data reframes them as recruitment numbers. The report is made up of an executive summary further comprised of summary statistics for both active duty and reserve military. Of historical importance, this report provided a new section focusing on non-citizens in the military. Mention of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act was made under this section under the context that there is continued need for people with language and cultural skills critical to the war effort. I am critical of this reference to DREAMers in this way because it implies recruitment of yet another group that is vulnerable to exploitation due to their lack of citizenship.

The bulk of my analysis drew from data provided in a table titled, “Non-Prior Service Active Component Enlisted Accessions, FY10: by Service, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity with

Civilian Comparison Group.” Though rich data was provided in the form of raw numbers and percentages, the categories for race were not congruent with the way I refer to some racial groups in this dissertation. Specifically, the term “Hispanic” was used to refer to a group that I classify as “Latina/o.” For purposes of remaining consistent with my preferred classification, I changed the name “Hispanic” to “Latina/o” in my discussion of demographics. The table and report also classifies Latina/os as an ethnicity rather than a race. Classifying Latina/os as an ethnicity made direct comparisons with racial categories challenging. To work around this limitation, comparisons are provided between Latina/os and Non-Latina/os since demographics were disaggregated between these two categories.

Finally, I used data provided in the table to calculate a percentage I refer to as a “recruitment rate.” This percentage was not accounted for in the original source of data, but a close introspection of the statistics provided made it possible for me to generate the percentage of the total population aged 18 to 24 who were successfully recruited into the military. By adding the accession population number with the civilian population figure, I was able to generate a total population for this age group. I then divided the accession population number by the total population to determine the percentage of the population that entered the military in 2010. Before delving into the recruitment rate, some context on the background of the application pool is needed to understand the size and scope of the applicant pool of recruits. The section that follows provides such context.

Demographics

Applicants vs. Enlistees. A total of 308,112 people applied to enlist in the US military across four branches of the military: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force.¹⁷ Of those that applied, only 160,511 went on to enlist in one of the four branches of the military that the report addressed, indicating 52% of applicants materialized into actual recruits. The source of the data characterizes the recruiting environment as “good” due to high unemployment rates, making US military enlistment an attractive option. However, the report identified several challenges to the military’s ability to enlist youth, defined as those aged 18 - 24. These challenges include a lower likelihood of youth influencers recommending service. Influencers are delineated as parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and coaches. In other words, influencers are adults who recommend military service to a youth. Absent from the discussion of influencers is the role of peers in influencing other peers to join the military. The report fails to classify peers as influencers, but my research indicates that peers greatly influence the military-going process. Subsequent chapters will underscore data that speak to this particular theme of peers acting as influencers, showing that peers can also be characterized as influencers and may actually impact a youth’s decision to enlist in the military more so than adults as influencers.

Also missing is a racial analysis of the impact influencers have on different groups. No discussion is provided that mentions if this lower likelihood of influencers to recommend military service to youth holds true across racial groups. While not the focus of my study, I speculate that influencers of Latina/o youth may actually have a greater likelihood of recommending service and this gap in the literature merits further study. Parents of Latina/os in particular may play a large role in influencing military service especially because my literature

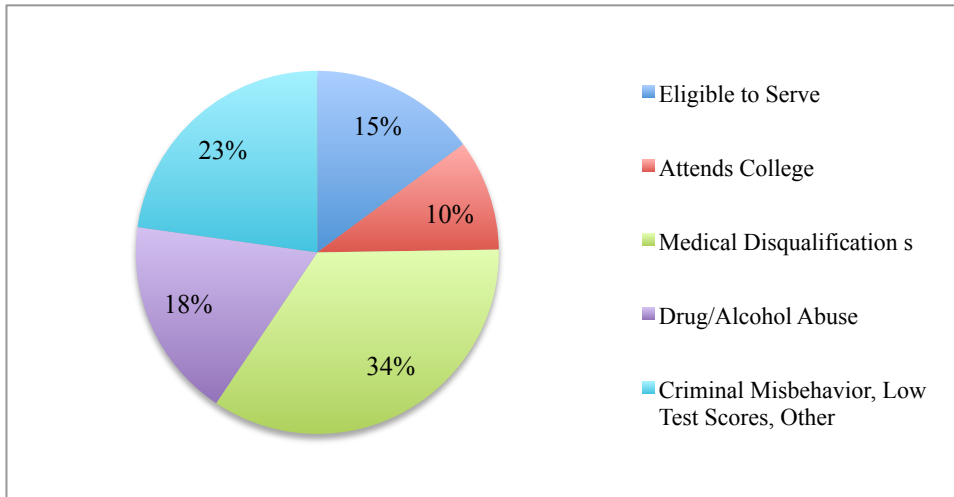
¹⁷ Statistics for US Coast Guard were not included, because this military branch falls under the auspices of the Department of Homeland Security as opposed to the four aforementioned branches that are a part of the Department of Defense.

review revealed that Latina/os are the most supportive of military enlistment (Leal, 1999). Other factors contributing to the challenge of the military's ability to attract youth include the increased number of youth going directly to college from high school, prolonged length of service, and an increase in the proportion of youth ineligible to serve.

The report further cites several reasons that disqualify applicants from service. Such reasons concern 1) medical disqualifications, 2) drug and/or alcohol abuse, 3) low aptitude scores, and 4) high number of dependents. To elaborate, medical disqualifications such as obesity render 35% of youth unable to serve, 18% are disqualified due to drug or alcohol abuse, and 23% are removed from the applicant pool due to criminal misbehavior, low aptitude scores, or more dependents that can be accommodated on the salary of an enlistee (Moore, et al., 2005; Seifert et al., 2007). Resulting in a 25% eligibility pool, an additional 10% can be subtracted because the report asserts that this group attends college. In the end, only 15% of the youth population is both eligible and available to serve. It is important to note that the percentages shared by the report underscores the population that is unable to serve based on the US population of youth as opposed to the population that apply. It is not clear if the aforementioned statistics are generalizable to the population that apply, however, reading the report in context gives the impression that the statistics hold as true for the application population. The following pie chart labeled Figure 4.1 depicts the aforementioned statistics in a visual manner:¹⁸

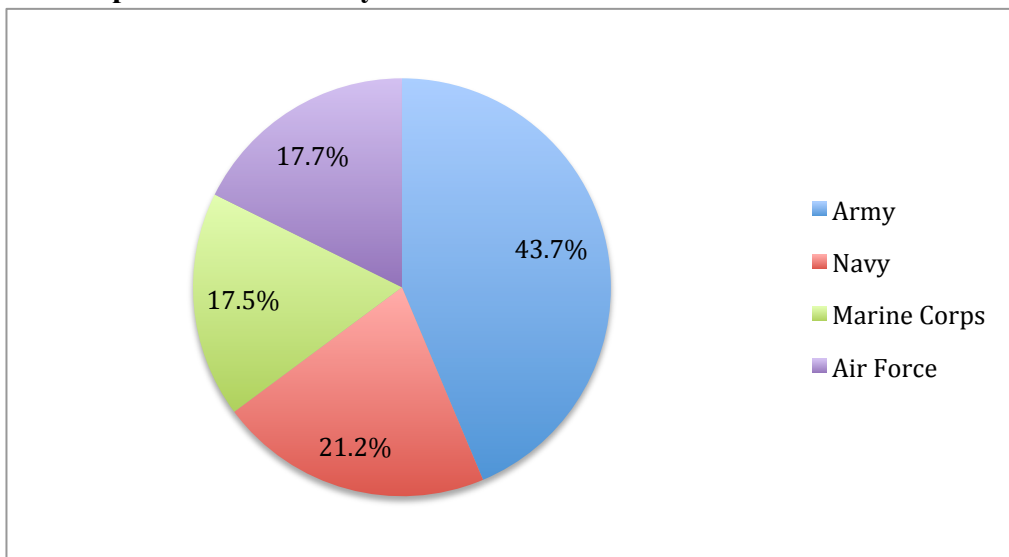
¹⁸ Note that the percentages add up to 101 as opposed to 100. No explanation was provided on the original report explaining why percentages do not add up to 100, but the report does cite the following two sources as the original basis of the calculations: (1) Carol Moore et al. *Qualified Military Available: New Estimates of the Eligible Youth Population*. Apr. 2005; and (2) Rita Furst Seifert et al. *Estimating Qualified Military Available. Final Report*. Nov. 2007. I suspect rounding explains why percentages add up to 101. For the purposes of generating a pie chart, I took the liberty of slightly modifying some of the percentages in order to yield percentages adding to 100.

Figure 4.1: Military Service Eligibility



Military Branch. By far, the largest branch of the military is the Army. In 2010, the Army accounted for 44% of all military recruits. The second largest branch of the military is the Navy, accounting for 21% of military recruits. Next in line in order of size is the Air Force. This branch of the military accounted for 18% of recruits and finally the Marine Corps recruited 17% of the Department of Defense military. For closer accuracy, Figure 4.2 depicts a pie chart illustrating the composition of the military across these four branches to the closest tenth of a percentage point:

Figure 4.2: Composition of Military Per Service Branch



Gender, Race, and Ethnicity. Of the 160,511 who were recruited into the military in 2010, 83% were men and 17% were women. Their comparison group of 18 to 24 year old civilians shows gender that is closer to the more conventional fifty-fifty composition mirrored in society at large. Specifically, the 18 to 24 year old civilian group is comprised of 50.3% men and 49.7% women. Clearly, men are over-represented in the military, but this is not surprising considering historical, cultural, and political views toward women serving in the military. This gender-gap in the military holds up across all branches of the military. Table 4.1 illustrates gender composition for the branches in the military that fall under the auspices of the Department of Defense:

Table 4.1: Gender Demographics Recruited in the Military, 2010

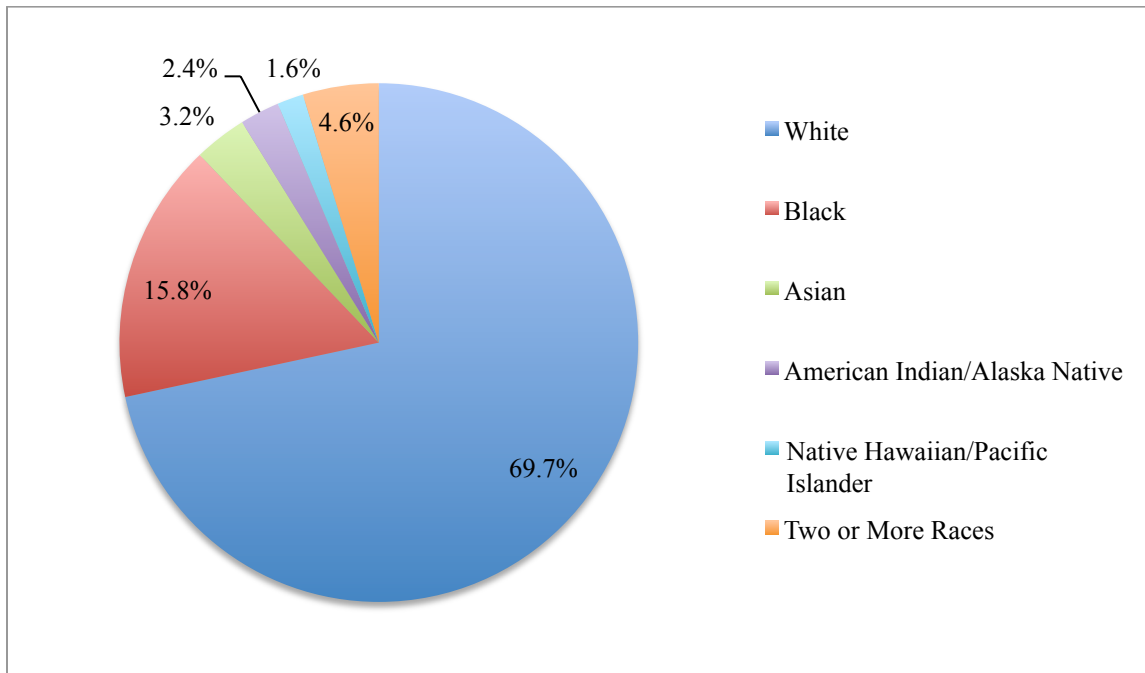
	Army		Navy		Marine Corps		Air Force	
Gender	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Percentage	84%	16%	78%	22%	91%	9%	81%	19%

With 22% of recruits comprised of women, the Navy is the branch with the smallest gender gap. On the other hand, the Marine Corps has the largest gender gap – comprised of only 9% women. In general, this branch of the military is often perceived as the most hyper-masculine of all service branches. My participants also reported perceiving the Marine Corps as the “toughest” of the military branches and thus, a more attractive service branch to join because of the hyper-masculine connotations associated with this branch. Subsequently, it is not surprising that the Marine Corps has the highest gender gap, but nonetheless this is a concerning gap due to the extreme imbalance of the genders.

By and large, the largest racial group that is recruited into the military is White, accounting for 70% of the military branches accounted for under the Department of Defense.

Blacks account for 16% of the military, while Asians comprise 3% of the population in the military. American Indians and Alaskan Native account for another 2% of the military as a racial joint-racial category. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are also considered a joint-racial category and this group accounts for 2% of the military. A larger group than Asians, Alaskan Indians/Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, identified under the category of “two or more racial groups.” Specifically 5% of the military identified with two or more racial categories. Finally, 3% of the military population had an unknown racial category. For simplicity purposes, the percentages provided in this paragraph were rounded to the nearest whole number and subsequently do not add up to 100%, but the following pie chart portrays percentages to the closest tenth of a point for better accuracy:

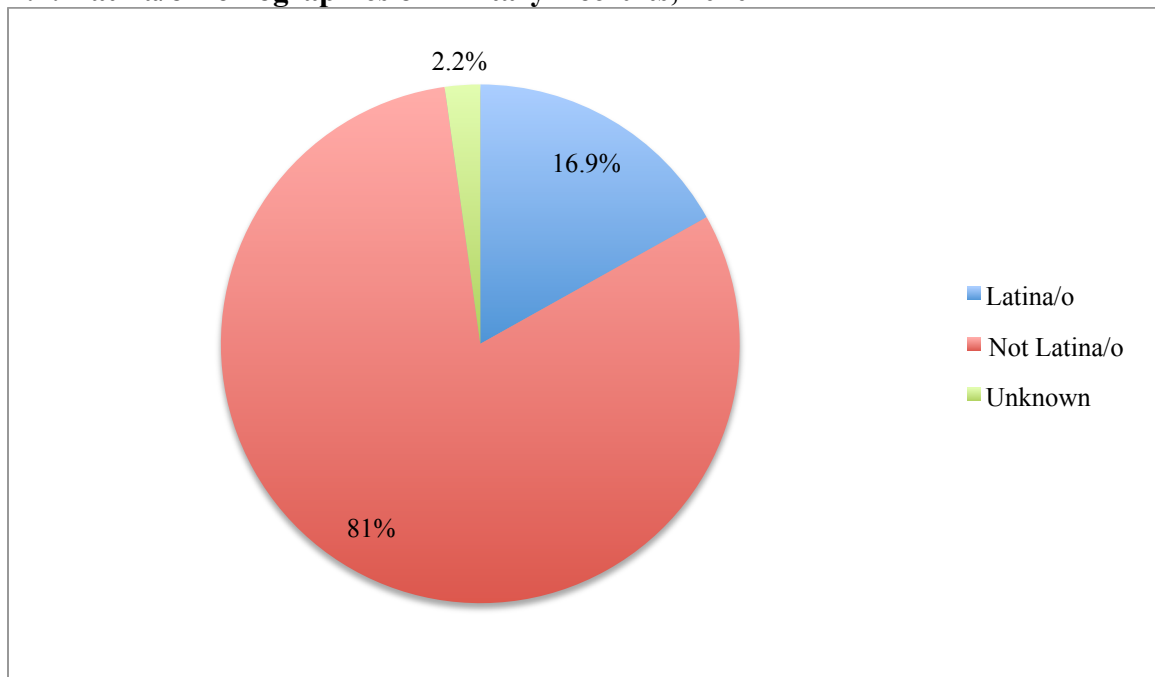
Figure 4.3: Racial Demographics of Military Recruits, 2010¹⁹



Again, making direct comparisons of the racial groups discussed in the preceding paragraph with Latina/os proved difficult due to the categorization of Latina/os as an ethnicity as opposed to a race. Nonetheless, a discussion of the Latina/o demographics is in order due to my research interest in this group per the topic of this dissertation. Seventeen percent of the Department of Defense military branches is comprised of the Latina/o demographic. 81% did not identify as Latina/o and a remaining 2% were unknown. Figure 4.4 depicts a pie chart reflecting the ethnic demographics of Latina/os discussed in this section:

¹⁹ A relatively small segment of the pie chart noting 2.6% of Racial Unknowns was left out due to Excel spreadsheet error. I tried correcting the error numerous times, but Excel kept unexpectedly closing down. Though I considered redoing the chart, I opted not to risk further unexpected errors and instead this footnote should bring clarity to the pie chart.

Figure 4.4: Latina/o Demographics of Military Recruits, 2010



A Gendered and Racial Analysis of Military Recruitment Rates

Less than one percent of youth aged 18 to 24 are successfully recruited into the military per year.²⁰ Specifically, 0.55% of this age group joins the military. However, there are sharp differences in this percentage when accounting for gender and race. Young men are recruited at a percentage of 0.91% of the 18 to 24 year old population whereas only 0.18% of young women are recruited into the military. In other words, young men are five times more likely to join the military.

The recruitment rate for Black women is markedly higher when compared to all women in aggregate, but also for women in each racial group. Specifically, I calculated this group to join the military at a rate of 0.3% of the general population for Black women. This means that Black women join the military at rate that is 66% higher than all women in aggregate. When compared

²⁰ Successful recruitment in this context implies that a person joined the military. Again, I avoid using the term enlistment for reasons articulated earlier in this chapter. In this section, I continue using recruitment with the understanding that it is intended to mean successful recruitment.

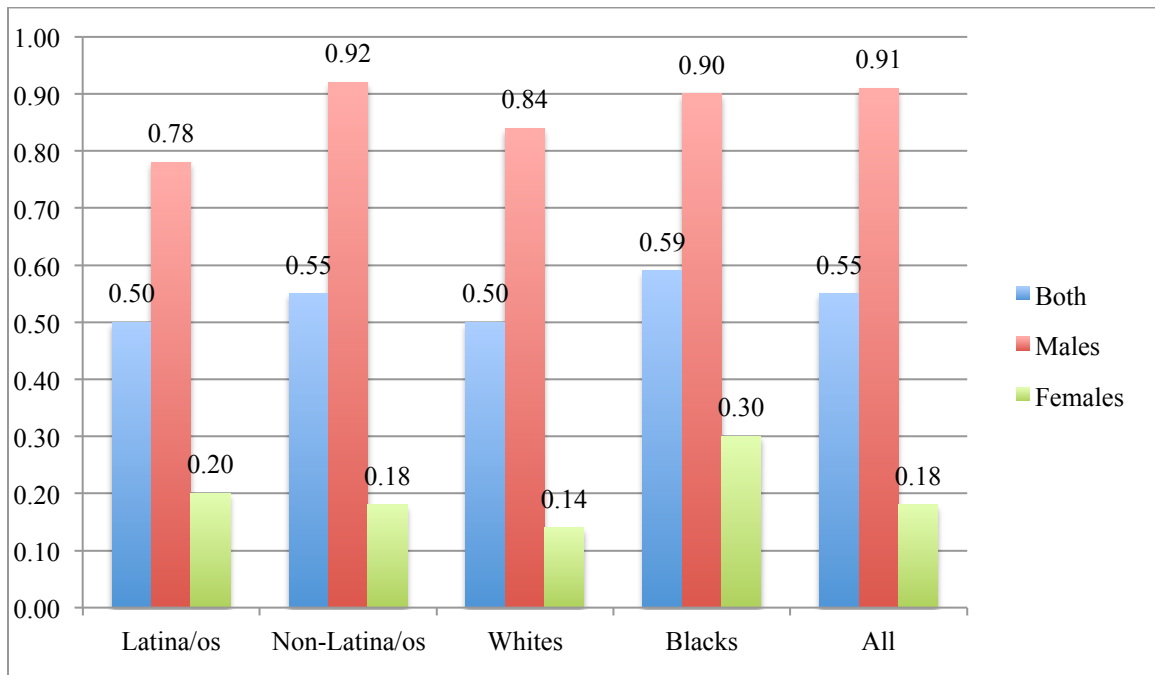
to Latinas, this group joins at a rate of 0.2% of the general Latina population, indicating that the rate for Black women is 50% higher than Latinas.

White women on the other hand, show a recruitment rate of 0.14% of their general population. Comparing the recruitment rate for Black women to white women reveals that Black women join the military at more than twice the rate of white women. I suspect this is due to structural inequalities and institutional racism impacting the post-secondary school decision-making process for Black women in particular ways. To add fuel to my argument, the poverty rate for Black women stands at 25% whereas the poverty rate for white women is only 10% (Entmacher, Robbins, Vogtman, & Frohlich, 2013). Considering the sharper poverty rate for Black women, joining the military may present itself as an attractive option because of limited other options that provide economic mobility for Black women. That is not to suggest that joining the military actually does provide economic mobility for Black women, but the significantly larger recruitment rate for Black women merits a discussion probing into the potential reasons for such a high recruitment rate. Though this topic is outside the scope of my own research, a *Jotería* lens would argue that race, gender, and class operate in a way that is specific to the experiences of Black women when it comes to military recruitment of this group.

Latina women's recruitment percentage merits some further attention, discussion and analysis. As stated earlier, Latinas join the military at a rate of 0.2% of their respective general population. This percentage is not too much greater than the 0.18% of non-Latinas who join the military. This is the same percentage of women who join the military when all racial groups in aggregate are considered. However, Latinas have a 43% higher percentage than white women who join the military. Specifically, 0.14% of the general population of women joins the military.

In spite of this dissertation being focused on Latino military veterans, discussion of recruitment percentages for women were fore fronted due to the sharper inequalities that were underscored when calculating these figures. When centering the analysis on recruitment of men, figures suggest inequalities are not as sharp as they are for women. Nonetheless, a discussion on recruitment percentages for men is warranted. When considering all men 18 to 24 years old, 0.91% of this group joins the military. This figure remains close to equal for both Non-Latina/os and Black men. To be exact, 0.92% of Non-Latina/os and 0.9% of Black men join the military. The number is slightly lower for white men; only 0.84% of white men join the military. Surprising to me was that Latino men had the lowest percentage of recruitment amongst the racial groups analyzed for this dissertation chapter. Latino men joined the military at 0.78% of their respective general population group. It is critical to keep in mind that this percentage is inclusive of all ethnic Latina/os, including those that identified as another racial group. Subsequently, it's possible that non-white Latina/os have a higher percentage but the data does not allow for the calculation of this figure. Finally, a bar graph of recruitment rates discussed in this section is provided in Figure 4.5:

Figure 4.5: Military Recruitment Percentage Rate by Racial Group and Gender



Women of Color in the Military

I originally planned on only underscoring Latina demographics in this section due to the focus on Latina/os specified by the research question. However, due to the startling results of my data analysis, I decided to include discussion of Black women in this section as well. Collectively, I refer to these two groups, Latinas and Black women, as Women of Color as way to frame this section, yet I want to highlight that I omitted discussion of other Women of Color (e.g. American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Two or more races) because their respective recruitment demographics were relatively smaller than Latinas, Blacks, and whites. To begin the discussion, I want to provide data illustrating the percentage of military recruits identified as Latina per branch in comparison to their civilian counterparts in Table 4.2:

Table 4.2: Percentage of Military Identified as Latina per Branch in 2010 with Civilian Comparison Group

	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Total DoD	18-24 Yr-Old Civilians
Latina	13.5%	26.2%	22.4%	20.7%	19.4%	17.9%
Non-Latina	82.5%	73.8%	71.6%	79.3%	78.4%	82.1%
Unknown	4.0%	0%	6.0%	0%	2.2%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

One of the more salient findings is that 26% of women who were recruited into the Navy in 2010 identified as Latina. This branch of the military had the highest composition of Latinas when compared to other branches. To illustrate how over-represented Latinas are in the Navy, I turn to the 18 to 24 year old civilians as a comparison group. Latinas accounted for 18% of 18 to 24 year olds in the United States in 2010. This suggests that Latinas were over-represented by six percentage points in the group of women who were recruited into the Navy.

By comparison, the women recruited into the Army were comprised of 14% Latinas. The Army branch of the military had the lowest composition of Latinas compared to the other three branches. The Marine Corps showed the second highest concentration of Latinas. Specifically, 22% of female Marines identified as Latina. Finally, 21% of females recruited into the Air Force identified as Latina.

Another way to analyze Latina demographics in the military is to examine the percentage of Latinas who enter each branch of the military. A total of 5,164 Latinas were recruited into the military in 2010, accounting for 19% of all women recruited in the military for that same year. To provide context, a total of 26,606 women were recruited. Of the group of Latinas, a plurality

overwhelmingly enlisted in the Navy. Specifically, 38% of Latinas who were recruited joined the Navy. The fact that Latinas enlisted in the Navy more so than any other branch of the military is unique to this group because the Army is where the majority of all other racial groups joined. In the case of Latinas, 29% of recruits enlisted in the Army. Finally, 22% of Latinas joined the Air Force and the remaining 11% joined the Marine Corps. My overall finding is that Latinas are over-represented in the military when compared to their civilian counterparts and this over-representation is especially sharp in the Navy.

For Black women, the over-representation is even sharper – in particular for Black women in the Army. One out of every three women who were recruited in the Army in 2010 identified as Black. To be more specific, 31% of women in the Army identified as Black. This statistic is particularly alarming considering that only 16% of the female population aged 18 to 24 identified as Black. This means that Black women are over-represented in the Army service branch of the military when compared to their age range-specific civilian counterpart. Indeed, Black women in the Army are close to double the concentration of women found in the civilian group. In an age where Black women are under-represented in higher education, it is very alarming that Black women are dramatically over-represented in terms of percentage of the population in the Army.

Over-representation of Black women can be found across three out of the four branches of the military that fall under the auspices of the Department of Defense. In aggregate, one out of every four women recruited by the military is Black. This statistic holds true for the Navy branch of the military where specifically 24% of women are Black. The women enlisted in the Air Force also have a demographic where 25% of the women identify as Black. On the other hand, the Marine Corps reflects a military branch where only 14% of women are Black.

It is clear from examining these demographics for Black women across the military branches that the Army is the most attractive of all four branches. This is also the case when examining the percentage of Black women that enlist per each branch of the military. Findings from this type of analysis reveal that the majority of Black women enlist in the Army as reflected by the 52% of Black women who join this branch. Though the Navy was the most attractive branch for Latinas, this branch was the second most attractive for Black women. In particular, 27% of Black women are recruited into the Navy. The Marine Corps only draws 5% of Black women and the Air Force draws 17% of this group.

Latinos in the Military

To keep this section aligned with the manner in which I discussed Latinas, I provide an overview of Latino demographics regarding their composition per branch in the military using Table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3: Percentage of Military Identified as Latino per Branch in 2010 with Civilian Comparison Group

	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Total DoD	18-24 Yr-Old Civilians
Latino	12.2%	23.4%	17.9%	17.3%	16.4%	19.2%
Non-Latino	83.5%	76.6%	80.8%	82.7%	81.5%	80.8%
Unknown	4.3%	0%	1.3%	0%	2.2%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Similar to Latinas, their male counterparts, Latinos, had the highest representation in the Navy, accounting for 23% of Sailors. Considering only 19% of civilians aged 18 to 24 identify as

Latino, this is an over-representation of four percentage points within that branch of the military. For comparative purposes illustrating the relative high percentage of sailors identified as Latino, the Marine Corps reported the next largest percentage of Latinos in its branch at 18%. Though beyond the scope of the chapter's research question, my theoretical hunch as to why the two branches with the highest concentration of both Latina/os are the Navy and Marine Corps is because it has to do with the perception of these branches as the most challenging. As explained in the previous chapter, there is an organizational history tying the Navy and Marine Corps under the auspices of the US Department of the Navy. This history contributes toward my tentative theoretical hunch provided here as a preliminary analysis explaining why these two branches might have the highest concentration of Latina/os – an idea that is further explored via the qualitative data provided in the next two chapters.

The Air Force is the next branch with the third highest concentration of Latinos. Specifically 17% of the Air Force is comprised of Latino Airmen. Concluding my discussion on Latino demographics for individual branches is the Army, a branch where 12% of Soldiers are Latino. In aggregate, the military branches across the Department of Defense is comprised of 16% Latinos, a composition that is three percentage points less than their civilian counterparts. Worth noting as a key finding is that Latinas are over-represented whereas Latinos are under-represented when considering overall Latina/o composition in the Department of Defense. Another, more nuanced finding, is that both Latina/os are overrepresented in the Navy.

My discussion of Latino recruitment as a pipeline is relevant in this particular discussion. It is yet another way to examine the Latino demographic, but this time I take Latinos and analyze how they are disaggregated across the four branches of the military. Latinos accounted for 21,923 of the 133,905 male recruits who entered the military in 2010, accounting for 16% of

males. Of this group of Latinos, 33% joined the Army, the branch comprised of the most Latinos. This is a marked contrast to Latinas who were recruited into the Navy as the top destination for their respective pipeline. For Latinos, the Navy was the second top destination as indicated by 28% of Latinos who were recruited as Sailors. Finally, 21% were recruited into the Marine Corps and 18% into the Air Force.

The Latino Military Recruitment Pipeline

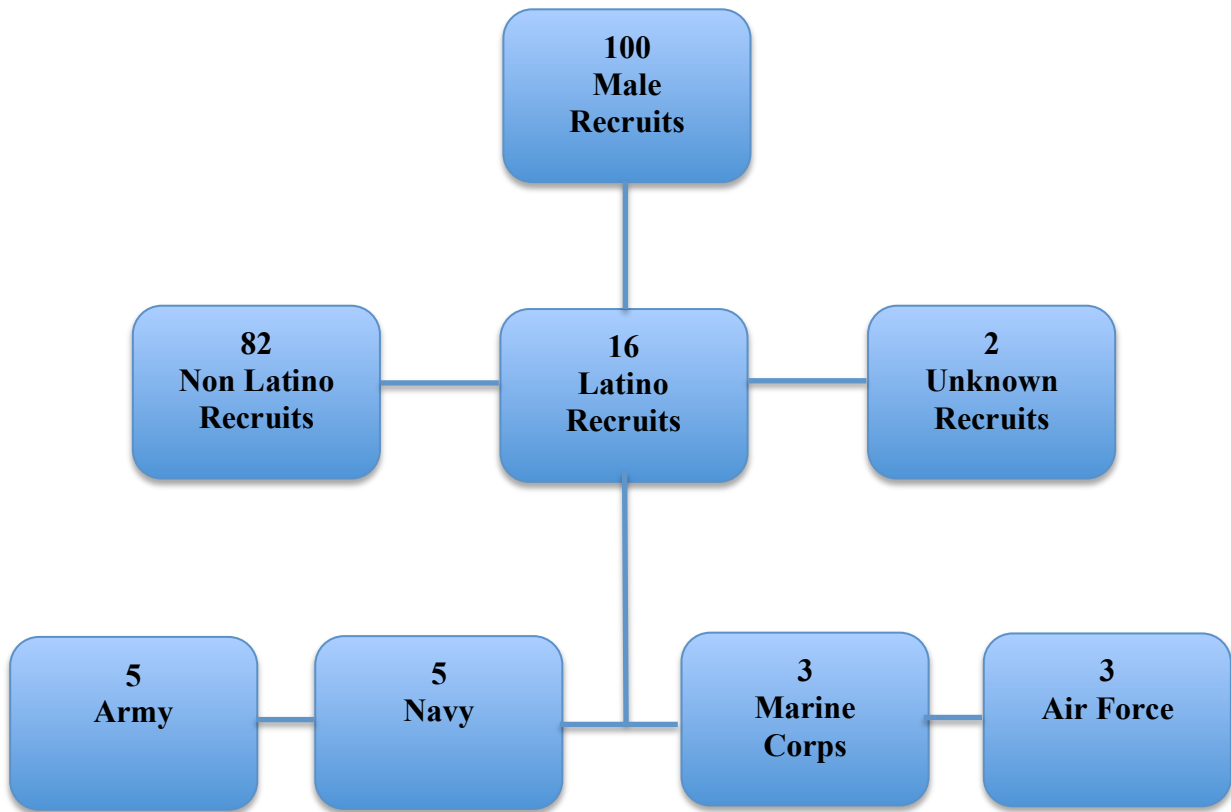
In the previous two sections I provided discussion and analysis pertaining to the percentages of Latina/os who are recruited into specific military branches. However, I did not present these percentages in the form of a visual portrayal of a pipeline because I wanted to share the figures as part of a narrative specific to disaggregated Latinas and Latinos first and then use the resulting findings to fashion together a pipeline. Due to the specificity of Latinos as the focus of my study, I only articulate this group as part of the pipeline. Before depicting the pipeline, I illustrate the data in raw numbers and percentages in order to provide context for how I arrived at my Latino Military Recruitment pipeline. Table 4.4 illustrates the percentages used to generate the pipeline:

Table 4.4: Latinos, Non-Latinos, and Unknown Recruited by Military Branch, 2010

	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Total DoD
Number of Latinos	7,197	6,195	4,563	3,968	21,923
Percentage of Latinos	32.8%	28.3%	20.8%	18.1%	100%
Number of Male Non-Latinos	49,232	20,330	20,616	18,925	109,103
Percentage of Male Non-Latinos	45.1%	18.6%	18.9%	17.3%	100%
Number of Male Unknown	2,548	0	329	2	2,879
Percentage of Male Unknown	88.5%	0%	11.4%	0.1%	100%

Using the percentages above, I now introduce the hallmark of this chapter, The Latino Military Recruitment Pipeline, as the following visual representation depicted in Figure 4.6:

Figure 4.6: The Latino Military Recruitment Pipeline, 2010



Source: Fiscal Year 2010 Summary Report of Population Representation in the Military Services

In this visual representation of a pipeline, 100 male military recruits enter the Department of Defense. Sixteen out of those military recruits identified as Latino, 82 as non-Latino and two are unknown as to their Latino identification status.²¹ Those sixteen military recruits get furthered funneled through the pipeline across the four branches of the military. Specifically, five of those Latinos are recruited into the Army, followed by five into the Navy, three into the Marine Corps, and finally three into the Air Force.

²¹ I use the term “Latino identification status” here to avoid confusion between the ethnic identification status assigned to this group under the Department of Defense versus my preference to refer to Latinos as a race.

Conclusion

In sum, the quantitative data provided in this chapter allowed me to tease out Latina/o demographics in various forms of analyses. The data discussed allowed for intragroup racial comparisons for Latina/os and intergroup comparisons between Latina/os and non-Latina/os. The theoretical framework of *Jotería* was particularly useful in that it allowed me to couch the data by privileging an insightful discussion of Women of Color prior to engaging in the findings for Latinos. Reflecting on the findings collectively produces the following concluding points as they relate to the central research question:

- The military recruitment rate for Latina/os was calculated at 0.5% of their civilian comparison group, a rate that is slightly lower than their non-Latina/o counterparts.
- The military recruitment rate for Latinas was calculated at 0.2% of their female civilian comparison group, a rate that is slightly higher than their non-Latina counterparts.
- The military recruitment rate for Latinos was calculated at 0.78%, a rate that is lower than their male non-Latino counterparts.

It is important to keep in mind that the above recruitment rates are specific to the year 2010. Further work needs to be conducted to see if the recruitment rates hold constant for years after 2010. I also suspect that recruitment rates will change if calculated using a different methodology than the one I applied for this study. For example, criteria for selecting my study's participants included the criterion that they must have made the decision to enlist in the military within one year of high school graduation. Subsequently, generating a recruitment rate that is specific to Latina/os between the ages of seventeen to twenty years of would be more aligned with the range of ages reflected by my participants when they were recruited into the military. Unfortunately, the data set I worked with could not extrapolate this specific age range.

To close this chapter, I want to return back to and address the broader question identified in the introduction: Who goes to war? Given the military recruitment pipeline I generated, and purpose of my study, I can address this question by stating that 17% of military recruits are

Latina/o. When only considering males, 16% of those who are recruited identify as Latino. In times of US military conflict, these are the Brown faces who go to war – faces like Martin.

I never did receive a reply back from Martin. As of this writing, I wonder if he became part of the higher education portion of the pipeline I discussed in the beginning of this chapter or part of the military recruitment pipeline my research uncovered as the centerpiece of this section. I still hold out hope that he will eventually reach out to me for assistance in going to college. And on that note, the chapters that follow will delve into a robust analytical discussion pertaining to findings that address the educational experiences of Chicano and Latino military veterans.

Chapter 5

Spiritual Warriors: Intersectional Identities of Chicano and Latino Military Veterans

I think because, to be kind of simplistic about it, I think Chicanos, males especially that come from our type of background, because they come from such a trying, traumatic, baptism by fire, youth and upbringing – I think they kind of identify themselves as almost like spiritual warriors already and so that spiritual warrior ethic is almost like a bushido that translates into loyalty above all else. Loyalty and you know, an inner strength that carries over well into that strict stringent military life. You probably have heard this before. There's a reason why some of the most outstanding Marines that I came across in my service were African-Americans from Compton and Watts and South Central and cities like Albuquerque and Santa Ana and places like that. Inner-city type guys were some of the most outstanding Marines because they were already tough. They were already used to a hierarchy.

- Juan Enriquez, 34 year old Marine veteran

The concept of spiritual warriors, as captured in the poetic epigraph above, anchors the objective of this chapter: to illustrate how the intersectional identities of Chicano and Latino military veterans inform their educational experiences. According to my original dissertation proposal, this chapter was intended to be my final findings chapter, but as usually is the case with the data analysis phase, the findings reshape the architecture of the final product. In this particular case, I rearranged my second and third research questions from their original order to keep them aligned with my analytically-driven choice to sequence data leading to the culmination of a conceptual model I present in my concluding chapter – a Brown Masculinity Priming for Military Recruitment Model.

My decision to discuss the topic of identity as it pertains to the educational experiences of this study's participants is underscored by the original question, "How do race, gender, and sexuality influence the life stories of Latino military veterans?" The data I collected necessitated a reworking of the research question and subsequently, the second research question for this dissertation now reads as follows: **How does identity influence the educational experiences of**

Latino military veterans who graduated from an Orange County high school in the mid-90s? Though I will address this research question, I also narrowed down the scope of the query to answer this related sub-research question: **Specifically, how does the intersection of identities shape their post-secondary academic trajectories?**

To address these questions in a robust and nuanced manner that is informed by the data, I will couch my chapter by using the theme of “Spiritual Warriors.” This theme was identified in the epigraph and I use it as the title for this chapter because I anchor the findings to this illuminating theme. The concept of spiritual warriors, as articulated by Juan Enriquez, a study participant, eloquently captures the essence of my participants’ identities as Chicano and Latino military veterans. To offer some context as to how Juan’s insightful quote came about, there came a pivotal point during his interview where I asked him about a tattoo he had etched onto the top of his right arm with the word, Aztlán.²² Specifically, I asked him how he made sense of the seemingly contradiction between his progressive Chicano political consciousness reflected by the Aztlán tattoo and his more conservative ideology echoed by his military identity as a Marine. Provided as an epigraph, Juan’s rich response was what transpired as his explanation – connecting Chicano and military identity in a salient and literary way by naming the conceptual space that exists between intersecting identities as spiritual warriors.

Consequently, I also use the theme of spiritual warriors as my guide for the direction of this chapter. Though tempting to define the concept of spiritual warriors in the introduction, I reserve a discussion on the meaning of the term as it is used in this dissertation toward the end of this chapter because my findings will inform how I eventually conceptualize spiritual warriors. To arrive at the meaning, I first provide a broad overview of the participants’ respective

²² Aztlán is the Náhuatl name for the ancestral land of the Aztecs located in what is now referred to as the Southwest region of the United States. Some Chicana/os, especially those actively involved in *El Movimiento*, view this land as occupied territory and call for a reclaiming of this land.

backgrounds in a description of the study's participants. I then divide this chapter into two complementary sections. The first section primarily addresses how identity informs the educational experiences of my participants. The second section discusses their service branch, type of service, and degree completion. Secondary themes such as military recruitment tactics and factors that influenced participants to enlist in the military will also be teased out as a result of the rich qualitative data. However, more emphasis on these secondary themes will be placed in the next chapter as I build toward a conceptual model of Chicano and Latino military recruitment. Finally, I end this chapter by commenting on how identity, as it relates to the idea of a spiritual warrior, and guided by a *Jotería* conceptual lens, helps inform the literature regarding the educational experiences of Chicano and Latino military veterans.

Intersectional Identities

Ethnic Identity as a Racialized Experience

Prior to elaborating on the ethnic identities of Latino military veterans, it is necessary to discuss the backgrounds for all participants of my study in order to provide context. In this section, I will provide a robust discussion on the ethnic identities of participants. I purposefully skip over their racial identities because in order to qualify for the study, all participants had to identify as Latino per recruitment criteria. However, it became clear that their ethnic identities became racialized experiences and I subsequently usher in this argument as a central finding for this section. Before I begin my discussion on ethnic identities, I provide Table 5.1 illustrating the participants' biographical backgrounds for contextual and comparison purposes:

Table 5.1: Biographical Backgrounds of Participants

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Sexuality	Grad Yr	Branch	Service Type	Degree
Jorge Barrera	Chicano	Straight/ Questioning	1996	Marines	Active	AA
Frank Garcia	Colombian/ Ch. Assoc. ²³	Straight	1996	Marines	Active/Reserves	AS
Miguel Reyes	Chicano	Straight	1996	Marines	Reserves	None
Juan Enriquez	Chicano	Straight/MSM	1996	Marines	Active	None
Rudy Ortega	Chicano	Straight	1996	Marines	Active	None
Adam Renteria	Chicano	Straight	1997	Marines	Active	None
Hector Morales	Chicano	Straight	1996	Navy	Active	None
Brian Pacheco	Mexican	Straight	1996	Marines	Reserves	None
Daniel Sanchez ²⁴	Chicano	Gay	2000	Marines	Active	BA/JD
Angel Silva	Guatemalan	Straight	1997	Marines	Active/Reserves	None

One sharp similarity amongst the participants is most of the men identified as Chicano. Though they all identified as Latino per criteria of the screening process, it became clear that seven out of the ten men proudly shared an affinity for the Chicano ethnic identity label. Though, as an outlier worth discussing, Brian Pacheco self-identified as Mexican, and has never used the term Chicano to describe his ethnicity. His preference for the term Mexican, as opposed to Chicano, stems from his father being from Zacatecas, Mexico. Subsequently, he identifies as Mexican. Brian’s ethnic identification as Mexican is echoed in the following exchange from the interview:

Brian: My dad is full Mexican. He grew up in Zacatecas. And my mom has different countries that her parents were from – grandparents. I have some from Nicaragua, Cuba. So it’s more of a mix.

²³ Stands for Chicano Associate. Specifically, this participant reported in his interview that he associates with the Chicano identity. This is explained further in the chapter as part of the discussion following table 5.1.

²⁴ Though Daniel Sanchez did not fit my original criteria for interview participants for graduation year requirement, it became clear per theoretical sampling procedures that I needed to interview someone who was openly gay in order to compare and contrast data from this interview with others. Theoretical sampling allowed for me to modify criteria as I moved forward in the research process. The chart also does not address that Daniel was dishonorably discharged due to the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy that was in effect at the time.

Me: So your mom is from different backgrounds?

Brian: She was born in New York, but yes, her dad was from Nicaragua and then her grandfather was from Cuba.

Me: I'm curious. Do you ever consider yourself Latino?

Brian: Yes.

Me: Do you ever use that terminology?

Brian: Unless it's asked on a questionnaire.

Me: So you prefer Hispanic or Mexican?

Brian: That's the term that I've always grown up using (referring to Mexican).

I provided the actual interview exchange from the protocol section inquiring about ethnicity to illustrate how a more nuanced discussion of ethnic identity for Brian reveals complexity regarding the very term ethnicity. In Brian's case, in spite of his maternal lineage including Cuban and Nicaraguan ancestry, his proclivity for identifying as Mexican is due to his consideration of his father as being "full Mexican." Though not directly stated, a contextual reading of the data reveals that Brian does not consider his Cuban and Nicaraguan ethnicities to be part of his own ethnicity because his mom is a mix of both. Coupled with his experience growing up identifying with the term Mexican, Brian affirmed his Mexican ethnic identity during the interview.

Finally, two other participants, Frank Garcia and Angel Silva, identify as Colombian and Guatemalan, respectively. In Frank's case, not only does he consider himself Colombian but he also aligns his ethnicity with Chicano identity. While probing to see if, how, and why Frank identifies as Chicano, I learn the following about his ethnic identity from the interview:

Me: Now, you self-identified as Latino. Do you, in any way, shape or form, also identify as Chicano?

Frank: Actually, you know what? I don't. I don't feel like I do, although I was

within that same – In my neighborhood where I grew up, that was the lifestyle. Part of me says yes, but part of me says no because that’s not – I don’t know how to explain it. I grew up with the lifestyle of Chicanos, but I wasn’t Chicano because to me I was the only Colombian in the hood, basically, and I felt that I was submerged in that lifestyle although I kind of felt it. I don’t know if you get it but –

Me: No, I do. Can you elaborate maybe perhaps a little bit? You called it lifestyle, a sort of Chicano lifestyle?

Frank: Yeah.

Me: How would you characterize or describe this Chicano lifestyle?

Frank: The Chicano lifestyle, as far as mixing the Spanish with the English, the speaking, the whole sitting down with the guys watching those old school movies and listening to the old school oldies, that’s mostly it.

Me: You know what’s interesting, I find very fascinating – I do a lot of work on language and you were the very first response when I asked about Chicano lifestyle, you mentioned mixing Spanish and English.

Frank: Yeah.

Me: So you associate that with being Chicano?

Frank: I actually do, yeah.

As illustrated in the interview exchange, further probing revealed Frank associates with the Chicano ethnic identity, but does not outright claim Chicano as his primary ethnicity; he reserves the term Colombian as his ethnic identity. However, his association with the Chicano identity stems from his perception of being Chicano as part of a lifestyle and living in a community where Chicanos are the demographic majority. Frank elaborates on what he deems “Chicano lifestyle” by equating the term to cultural performances such as speaking Spanglish and engaging with media reflecting Chicanos. In other words, he is Chicano by association and to honor his dual-ethnic roles as Colombian yet growing up in the Chicano lifestyle, I coined the term “Chicano Associate” to denote Frank’s ethnicity. Subsequently, I refer to Frank’s ethnicity

as “Colombian/Chicano Associate” to honor both his directly stated ethnic identity and the one he alluded to in context.

In Angel’s case, in spite of him living in the same community, he only identifies as Guatemalan. His steadfast affirmation of his Guatemalan ethnicity was evident even after probing for any affiliation with the Chicano identity. After asking Angel why he doesn’t see himself as Chicano, he explained, “I know Chicano has always been defined to me as someone who has descended from Mexicans and they need to have been born here in the United States. I know I’m very close to what a Chicano is, but I wouldn’t call myself a Chicano” (T10.1, P.1-2). In sharp contrast to Frank’s associative reasoning for living a Chicano lifestyle, Angel does not identify as such.

As for my remaining participants, they all identified as Chicano to varying degrees. Hector Morales explanation on why he identifies as Chicano casts the widest net that is reflective of the other participants’ rationale for also ethnically identifying as such. Hector’s explanation of what it means to be Chicano serves as an exemplar for other Chicano-identifying participants, explaining he is Chicano because in his “mind it’s Mexican-American, Chicano being the hyphen between the Mexican and American, versus Latino is just anything south of the border and Mexican is just Mexican. I was born in America.” My field note to Hector’s response also offers insight into his pronounced identification with being Chicano and the lens it affords toward a racialized experience. In my field note I elaborated on this thought by explaining, “Chicano identity is so powerful that it cements the racial frame under which this participant and others view themselves” (FN7.1, June 16, 2013). Such a frame is also connected to the geopolitical and demographic context under which said racialized experience is situated in – meaning racialized experiences are informed by the community where participants live.

I use data from Juan Enriquez's explanation of Chicano identity to reinforce the aforementioned argument. Juan describes a Chicano as, "a Mexican-American, but with the singular experience of growing up in a real barrio setting not a Mexican-American who grew up in Irvine probably wouldn't identify with Chicano." In Juan's contrast of a barrio to Irvine, some background is needed to better drive home his point. Drawing from 2000 census data, 76% of residents of the city where my participants grew up identified as Latina/o²⁵. When compared to the demographics of Irvine where only 7% of the population identified as Latino, the two cities vary sharply in their demographic composition.

Aesthetically, the city Juan refers to as a barrio is often characterized as urban by media and discourse at large. The "barrio" is comprised of a wide-range of dwellings that run the gamut in architectural style – from single-family California bungalows to rows of apartment complexes. Irvine, on the other hand, is a master-planned community consisting of cookie-cutter homes in what is characterized as the epitome of Orange County suburbia. The contrast of cities that are located adjacent to one another has implications for demographics as Juan further elaborates on how his city encapsulates, in his words, the "typical Chicano experience." Describing the city as homogeneous, Juan elaborates:

You know you can count all the Black kids in school on two hands. There were a lot of Asians, but few of them were my close friends. I think it was fairly limited and I didn't really have a lot of friends that were not Latino or Asian until I left to the military. It's very typical, had all the inner city barrio problems, gangs and violence. The younger part of my life I was absorbed by school and sports. So typical of first generation Chicano.

Albeit invoking problematic deficit-oriented description of his community, Juan's recounting of his high school racialized experience and observation of demographics imparts knowledge of

²⁵ I selected demographic data from the 2000 Census as opposed to 2010 data because the former year is closer to the time period Juan resided in the city he referenced and it was available via the US Census Bureau's American FactFinder.

school campus indexed by segregation. The fact that he could count African-American students enrolled in the school with two hands and only congregate with other Latinos and a few Asian students speaks to the sharp racial segregation at the school. Indeed, as articulated in chapter three, the high school he attended was comprised of 86% Latina/os, 9% Asians, 3% African Americans, and 2% Whites during the time period he attended (California Department of Education, 2015). Additionally, Juan's perception of Chicano identity as a singular experience is further captured by his repetitive use of the word "typical" when referencing Chicanos in the contexts of identity and experience. Invoking the guiding theme of spiritual warriors reveals that this barrio experience is aligned with the way he articulated Chicanos as coming from a trying and traumatic upbringing.

One last aspect of ethnic identity I saliently captured that is germane to the topic of this dissertation deals with the intersection of Chicano identity with military identity. Similar to the way Juan Enriquez used the concept of spiritual warriors in the epigraph as a metaphor for intersecting identities, Miguel Reyes articulates this intersection in a manner seamlessly capturing how a Chicano in the military can occupy dual-identities that on the surface may seem at odds with one another. Miguel explained how these two seemingly diametrically opposed identities co-exist within his sense of self:

That's a good question. I just kind of put it together. I don't think about it too much. I really don't because most of my friends that have been Marines have been Chicano, Latino. So I think I can be proud of my heritage while being proud of my home, which is here. And I think just being proud of both while being proud of what I do now and not leaving my heritage behind is probably key. You've got to make sure you can encompass both in your life. To me I don't put one over the other because obviously my whole family is Latino. But when I look at it, Chicano or Latino, to me I've never really dug down deep and looked at the differences between when somebody is Latino or Chicano or Hispanic. I've never dug down deep and said, "This is what a Chicano is or a Latino is or being Hispanic means." To me I kind of categorize them together. That's how I put them. So when somebody says, "Are you Chicano? Are you Latino?" I'm like, "Yes. Yes. Yes, that's me." But I don't separate them. Maybe that's because I haven't

had enough education in the differences between all of those but I categorize them all together. So to me, being in the military you're kind of conservative, but being Latino you're kind of more liberal. But to me I haven't had an issue combining both of them into my life.

The rich data above shares a perspective on being Chicano in the military that informs how this particular ethnic identity can be proudly expressed within a traditionally conservative institution such as the military. As someone who is proud of his Chicano heritage and associates his ethnic identity with his sense of his home community, Miguel also situates his Chicano sense of identity in his city. Similar to Hector who produced knowledge by articulating a racialized Chicano experience grounded in a specific geopolitical and demographic context, Miguel also illustrates this point in his own take on Chicano identity. In sum, it's fitting to end the discussion on ethnic identity as it intersects with military identity because my participants reflects Miguel's key point – Chicano and military identity can be combined into the lives of these veterans. I recognize the importance of such an intersection of identity, especially given the topic of this dissertation. As such, I will untangle the intersection and craft out a discussion of military identity in an upcoming section of this chapter. Before doing so, I segue into a discussion of my participants' sexual identities.

Complicating the Sexualities of Chicano and Latino Military Veterans

As I argued in my theoretical framework section of this dissertation, research and discourse on sexual identity, sexual orientation, and sexuality is often regulated to further margins than race, ethnicity, class and gender. A *Jotería* framework aims to rectify such problematic omission by intentionally placing a spotlight on sexuality as part of the research. Consequently, relative to other sections on identity, I intentionally elaborate more on sexual identity in this section because my framework guides my decision to allot more space for this

topic. To begin the discussion on sexual identity, nine out of the ten participants identified as straight.²⁶ However, two of my participants who preferred to identify as straight articulated engaging in behavior suggesting their sexuality to be more fluid than what superficially is conveyed by their preferred categorization as straight men. To illustrate, Jorge Barrera and Juan Enriquez both expressed experimenting sexually with other men. However, Jorge's response to the question on sexual identity revealed his behavior would classify him as someone who is questioning his sexual orientation. By contrast, Juan's response directly asserted his straight identity though he is secure in also affirming his past sexual behavior when he engaged in sex with another man.

Subsequently, I categorized both as straight per their own self-identification responses, but upon analysis of their interviews I was inclined to further complicate their sexual-identity descriptions by also labeling Jorge as questioning and Juan as MSM, a term denoting a man who engages in sex with other men. I will reserve data pertaining to Jorge's sexual identity for inclusion and discussion in the portrait section of the next chapter. However, I use data from Juan's interview and frame it through a *Jotería* perspective to center and intersect sexuality with other social constructs in this dissertation. Here I turn to data from Juan's interview to underscore how I arrived at identifying his sexual identity as Straight/MSM:²⁷

Me: What would you consider your sexuality to be, specifically sexual orientation, or however you define that for yourself?

Juan: Heterosexual.

²⁶I admit the term "straight" may sound colloquial, but I purposefully avoid using the term "heterosexual" because of the word has clinical etymological roots. It's binary construct, homosexual, also has a historical context in which the term was used to describe sexual deviants considered to be suffering from pathological mental illness. I refuse to use terminology laden with so much problematic context. That is not to suggest that the term "straight" doesn't come with it's own set of issues, but I prefer this term over heterosexual.

²⁷ I redacted data in between the ellipses because the interview momentarily segued into a tangential conversation about the participant's father before I refocused the interview on the topic of sexuality via my probing.

Me: Okay. Did you always consider yourself heterosexual?

Juan: Well, to be more specific I don't think I ever considered myself homosexual, but I can't speak for anyone else, but I'm not special. I think I went through that phase being I think literally I'm much more sensitive in growing up and very honest with myself growing up. I was never afraid of self-analysis even when I was really young.

Me: You are always reflective?

Juan: Yeah and I knew that there were other feelings inside of me whether they were – I don't know if whether they were already sexual. They were more I think emotional.

Me: Emotional?

Juan: Because I have a very absent father figure growing up and so I think I had a lot of unresolved father issues . . .

Me: . . . You said you consider yourself for the most part heterosexual so I assume you have sexual relations with women and you have sexual relations with men?

Juan: Mhm

Me: So tell me a little bit about that. You know this is a set of questions, but I'm trying to also kind of understand how that plays a role in this issue of masculinity. When did you start exploring that part of your sexuality and how did that unravel and where are you at now with regards to it?

Juan: It was in my mid 20s. I always knew that I had unresolved feelings and I've never been the type to be afraid of those things and basically it was during the time when I was drinking heavily and I was also dabbling in drugs – illegal drugs and by dabbling, I mean you know maybe on a weekend I'd do drugs.

Me: What kind of drugs?

Juan: Methamphetamine and occasionally cocaine and one of my friends who used to do the drugs. We hang out for the weekend and party do drugs basically. He was gay and one time when we were both fucked up he made a pass at me and let him make out and it's a little hazy to be honest.

Me: Because of the drugs.

Juan: I don't blame it entirely on the drugs, but I was always curious.

Me: Okay.

Juan: So I am not going to say I'm not one of those people who say oh it was that drug. Some of it was my own.

Me: You had been curious for some time prior to that?

Juan: All my life

As evidenced by the content and trajectory of the interview, probing for Juan's sexual identity could have potentially stopped as soon as he assertively answered that he identified as straight, or in his own words, "Heterosexual." I argue that in more traditional forms of research, questions regarding sexual identity are left at the margins, if incorporated at all. Using a *Jotería* framework to couch the study, allowed me to not only include sexuality as part of the discourse in this work, but guided my researcher's cultural intuition (Delgado-Bernal, 1998) to probe further on the topic of sexual identity.

Such probing yielded dividends, given Juan's rich response when I elaborated on my original question regarding sexual identity. While reflecting on his childhood and his sexual identity at that age, he referred to himself as sensitive, indicating he perceived the concept of sexual identity as a much broader social construct, one that is inclusive of gender performance in addition to sexual orientation. In a separate, but related part of the interview, Juan equates his gender performance as being, "a lot more sensitive than other males my age" (T4.Pg. 4). When asked to elaborate on how he related his gender performance to the concept of sensitivity, Juan mentioned he "could see in the point of view of others," and "had more girls that were friends that [he] was close to than boys [his] age." These kernels of data allowed me to conclude that his view of sensitivity as a feminine trait masked an even larger theme – empathy. In the context of the interview, Juan articulated an empathetic sense of self and this character trait was incongruent with masculinity. I explored this theme further in the following exchange:

Me: You alluded, and I want to make sure I interpreted correctly, that you consider yourself masculine now. But earlier on, because of the sensitivity trait, wasn't necessarily as much the case. So at one point, if there was a point, did you feel you transitioned to more masculine?

Juan: Yeah! Actually it was very evident to me. It happened like towards the tail end of my puberty. I wasn't any less than you know sensitive. I still think I felt for people deeply. I became reluctant, a better term harder person and things that would really bother me before about people's behavior or I would take things to heart. When I was younger I took things to heart really deeply. To the point it really affected my self-esteem and then later I just kind did not care as much.

Though Juan never mentions the word empathy during his reflective analysis on masculinity, a contextual reading of the data framed via *Jotería* produced empathy as a theme in these data. Specifically, Juan's response to my query indicates a childhood perception of masculinity that is at odds with publicly displaying signs of empathy. Particularly telling is Juan's use of the phrase, "felt for people deeply," suggesting he publicly showed sensitivity and empathy as a child, but due to internalizing this as a feminine trait, he distanced himself from showing what he characterized as a sensitive side, but in context, also revealed an empathic character trait. This distancing from these traits became more prominent during adolescence, a stage in development when the stakes are higher for males who are perceived as feminine.

To conclude my discussion on Juan's sexual identity, I offer another revealing excerpt from his interview where we engage in what I refer to as *Jotería* discourse. In other words, we complicate sexuality by co-theorizing about it from our respective standpoints as Latino males. The co-theorizing moment was captured when I began to inquire if his sexual experimentation with other men actually worked to confirm his sexual identity as straight:

Me: Did this perhaps maybe help solidify your identification as heterosexual as counter-intuitive as that sounds but –

Juan: Yes! Yeah because like I said I know we spoke earlier, but it really freed me. I always wondered about that. I was always curious. I mean

I'm not one of those guys that I would say don't ask me if that guy is attractive. That's absurd. Those are insecure men. I've always been very willing and easily, able to say yeah that guy's is attractive. I'm not insecure about it. Yeah! I did it. I think I got it out of the way. I realized it's not for me, but I'm glad I tried it to find out.

Me: Do you have no regrets?

Juan: No, not at all. Quite the opposite because it's like you never know if you like something unless you taste it – And I tasted it and when it wasn't for my palate and that's that.

Organically, we ensued in a mutual meaning-making process to understand Juan's foray into exploring his sexuality. On the surface, it may seem counterintuitive for a straight male to engage in sexual relations with another man; often such behavior with other men underscore the first stage of the coming out process. However, in Juan's case, it was his ability to comfortably explore his sexuality that eventually led him to conclude he is straight. His immediate affirmative "yes" to my analytical question regarding the solidification of his sexual identity due to his experience with exploring his sexuality, speaks to his strong sense of self for this particular domain of identity. Consequently, I honored his sexual identity classification by labeling him as such, but my *Jotería* perspective complicated his label by adding the descriptor "MSM" following his designation as straight.

I would be remiss if I do not include discussion of sexual identity for my only openly gay participant, Daniel Sanchez. Given the immediacy of sexual identity in this current section, I intentionally shift attention over to Daniel and I specifically sought him out for the study because it was important to include the experience of an openly gay veteran to further complicate the narratives of my participants' educational experiences. Daniel was referred to me through a colleague who mentioned he graduated from the same high school my other participants attended. He did not graduate from the high school around the time I specifically articulated in

my participant criteria nor was he recruited by the military directly after high school, but rather after he started college. As expressed with more details in my methodology chapter, theoretical sampling allows for changing criteria of additional participants because such changes is directed by evolving theory (Draucker, et al, 2007).

Given the rationale provided, it is apropos I share data concerning my only openly gay participant's response to my query about his sexual orientation. In the proceeding data, Daniel discusses his sexual identity and delves into his coming out process:

Daniel: I'm gay.

Me: Have you always known that you're gay?

Daniel: No. I knew when I was either late 12 or early 13. I think I was late 12. I was about 12 years old.

Me: Was there any particular incident or anything that happened?

Daniel: Yeah. It was this underwear magazine that my neighbor used to throw in. He would throw in all of his old magazines and there was just this one magazine that sold men's underwear. I just thought that the guys in there were hot. But before that, I was under the impression that I liked girls, because I only met girls and even sexually I wanted to be with a girl. It wasn't until I saw this magazine that I'm like, "Oh. That's something I want."

Me: Did that cement your sexual identity or did it start the process?

Daniel: It started the process. I fought it forever until I was 19 when I came out.

Unlike Jorge or Juan who engaged in same sex relations but identify as straight, Daniel comfortably identified as gay. Such an affirming sense of gay identity served as a cue for me to probe further on this topic and as a result, inquired into his coming out process. For Daniel, coming out started as an adolescent when he encountered advertisements for men's underwear. Viewing the sexual aesthetic of men in media triggered a questioning of his sexual orientation. As Jennings (2003) depicts in his model for coming out, the identity questioning stage that

Daniel experienced usually occurs when youth question whether they are gay. The stage that follows, coming out, is when youth move from tolerating to accepting their identity by disclosing it to family and close friends. In Daniel's case, it took him approximately seven years from the time he questioned his identity to the time he came out at the age of nineteen. After coming out, he built a better sense of his sexual identity, so much so that he perceives this facet of his identity as stronger than race, ethnicity, and class. Toward the end of the interview protocol section addressing identity, I asked Daniel for any additional comments he would like to contribute to help me understand his self.²⁸ His insightful response, revealed a nuanced view of his identity by explaining:

I tend to first maybe order the way in which I see myself. The first thing I see myself as is gay. That's the most relevant portion of my life and the one that I can always feel comfortable. There are a lot of issues with race within the gay community. A lot of gay people think that it's very white men centered. I tend to gravitate toward people who are Latinos, so that's not ever an issue for me. I first associate as gay because no one ever rejects me in the gay community for being Latino. But it's not seen the other way around. Latinos reject gay men a lot. That's always my second go-to identity.

Daniel's reflection of identity allowed him to sequence his sexual identity before his racial identity. He also complicates the intersection of race and sexuality in his introspective analysis by sharing he tends to socialize with other gay Latinos and subsequently feels comfortable with his racial identity as situated in this demographic context. However, to draw contrast with the intersection of his racial and sexual identity in the aforementioned social context, Daniel has experienced rejection for being gay when he socializes with the broader Latino community.

At the beginning of this section, I argued on the importance of highlighting sexual identity in my discussion because my *Jotería* theoretical perspective affords me the centering of

²⁸ I intentionally use the term "his self" instead of "him" or "himself" to end this sentence because the former better underscores my reference to his identity. I felt use of the word "him" or "himself" here would risk losing my intended meaning at the expense of being grammatically correct.

sexuality in this study. As such, I purposefully discussed participants whose sexualities took a departure from their straight counterparts. My straight participants offered direct responses to the question on sexual identity and unlike my other participants, my *Jotería* perspective did not hone in on any inklings suggesting their sexualities to be more complicated than what they reported. However, there was one exception to this general finding. When Frank Garcia declared his sexual identity as straight, I followed up with a question asking him to reflect on his sexuality while growing up to determine if he ever questioned his sexual orientation. He still identified as straight, but with one caveat:

It's not what people viewed of me though. I do really think that when I look back at it, I guess maybe it's because I'm always smiling. The way I dress maybe sometimes. But I would always get the feeling that a lot of people thought that I was gay.

In his response, Frank makes an important distinction between self-perception versus social perception of his sexual identity. In other words, though he has always identified as straight, others perceived him as gay due to his social expression across the domain of sexuality. Frank provided the example of a behavior that cultural outsiders may deem as trivial and unrelated to the topic of sexuality – the act of smiling.

I argue that when racial, sexual, and gender identities intersect in the case of Latino males, certain expectations are made as to how this group is to perform and express their sexual identities in particular because of the way these “Brown” males are stereotyped.²⁹ Such expectations are grounded in socialization cues from a young age and Frank’s comment regarding assumptions made about his sexuality simply because he smiled a lot, illustrate the

²⁹ The concept of Brown masculinity is a subject I address more fully in my conclusion chapter when I tie together all my findings in a theoretical model addressing how Chicano and Latino students are primed for military recruitment. I call my theoretical contribution, “Brown Masculinity Priming for Military Recruitment Model.” I purposefully refer to my Chicano and Latino participants as Brown from time to time in this chapter as a way to tease the reader and foreshadow my concluding discussion on Brown masculinity.

messaging Latino males receive on how to express their racialized and gendered sexual identities. This is important to note as I culminate my discussion on sexual identity for my study's participants because it led me to review the theme of sensitivity that was explored earlier with data from Juan Enriquez's life story. Only this time, the theme of sensitivity was extrapolated from data from other participants who also shared they grew up exemplifying a sensitive side to their personalities, only to shy away from public displays of sensitivity as they were socialized to perform their stereotyped confluence of racial, gender and sexual identities.

In the upcoming chart, I provide data next to each participant who discussed the theme of sensitivity as it relates to the confluence of racial, gender and sexual identities. The first column lists the participant while the second column portrays data in relation to the theme of sensitivity. I reserved the third column for a category I called, analytical theme, a term I use to denote a brief analysis of the data as it relates to the larger theme of sensitivity. In other words, the chart illustrates the typology I identified in the data with respect to how my participants conveyed sensitivity in the context of their identities. Though I already discussed the theme of sensitivity as it relates to Juan Enriquez's data when I analyzed his response to sexual identity, I included data from Juan in the chart as well to illustrate the regularity in which this theme came up for my study's participants. I also included data from Rudy Ortega twice because his response was classified under two typologies. Due to the semi-structured approach of the interview, the interview question leading into the responses varied in wording. However, the gist of the question was, "How would you characterize your gender expression while growing up?" In some cases, follow up questions to their responses yielded further data that I included in this chart because such data also included the theme of sensitivity. The data and corresponding analyses are as follows:

Table 5.2: Typology of Sensitivity and Racial/Gender/Sexual Identity as Themes

Participant	Data	Analytical Theme
<p>Juan Enriquez</p>	<p>I was a lot more sensitive than other males my age. I could see in the point of view of others and even I got a long. I had more girls that were friends that I was closed to than other boys my age.</p> <p>Actually it was very evident to me. It happened like towards the tail end of my puberty. I wasn't any less than, you know, sensitive. I still think I felt for people deeply, but I was a little bit I became reluctant a better term harder person and things that would really bother me before about people's behavior or I would take things to heart. I think I... When I was younger I took things to heart really deeply. To the point it really affected my self-esteem and then later I just kind did not care as much.</p>	<p>Sensitivity as empathy</p>
<p>Rudy Ortega</p>	<p>It depends and it's more in between. I don't consider myself male, masculine, chauvinist or in that language because I do have a sensitive side to myself. I don't show it out to many males because it's just in our culture, I guess. It's just the way I was brought up. That's what I can say.</p>	
<p>Angel Silva</p>	<p>I'm trying to think back. Was I a sensitive person? Was I caring? Yeah. I wasn't this tough kid that didn't care about anybody. I definitely understood emotions. I understood how someone can influence someone to be upset. Someone can influence someone in a positive or negative way. I always was sensitive to others.</p>	
<p>Miguel Reyes</p>	<p>When I look back, I didn't feel as masculine as I probably wanted to. Because to me, I would consider someone masculine as just tough all around. I consider the guys getting into fights the tough guys. Those are the guys that I'm like, "That guy is tough, don't mess with that guy." So those are like the real masculine guys and I was like, "Okay." I was always considered the nice guy. All my friends are like, "Oh you're so</p>	<p>Sensitivity as cordiality</p>

	nice.” So to me I don’t think I was categorized as masculine. I was considered a nice guy.	
Frank Garcia	<p>Kind of like in the middle. Because I am masculine in such ways. I feel that and I have that aggressiveness about me. But then again, I do have that caring aspect about myself that really gives that heart and soul to people in a sense. And I am very artistic with food. I like to cook. And I listen to classical music too. Things of that nature.</p> <p>I do think in between. And it’s really funny when I was at the Adirondack Mountains, I was in charge of the kitchen. After a 12-hour shift, I used to put trees on my shoulders and go run and hit tires. I built a big giant mound of dirt to hit it and punch it. And on my time off, I would write little special notes to people, quotes and stuff and how much I cared about them, etc., how beautiful they were in person. That’s why I always say in between.</p>	Sensitivity as Nepantla
Rudy Ortega	It depends and it’s more in between. I don’t consider myself male, masculine, chauvinist or in that language because I do have a sensitive side to myself. I don’t show it out to many males because it’s just in our culture, I guess. It’s just the way I was brought up. That’s what I can say.	
Brian Pacheco	I would say in the middle because I believe I try to be tough but at the same time I do have a sensitive side where I do care about feelings and treating others fairly. Not that a tough guy or whatever doesn’t care about those things, but I just strongly believe that that is a big part of me.	

Specifically, six of my participants incorporated the theme of sensitivity in their responses to questions regarding their gender and/or sexuality identities. Sensitivity came up eight times throughout the data when coding for this particular theme. Similar to my analysis of data from Juan who reported being more sensitive than other males his age during childhood, my analysis of Angel Silva’s data connects sensitivity to empathy. Angel grew up caring about others and

understanding emotions. Correspondingly, my analytic theme for his data is “sensitivity as empathy.” In Miguel Reyes analysis of his data, I classified his data as “sensitivity as cordiality” due to his reference of being the nice guy, but not masculine.

My last analytic theme draws on Anzaldúa’s concept of *Nepantla* again, only this time I connect the concept under the idea of “sensitivity as *Nepantla*.” The idea underscored by the analytic theme of sensitivity as *Nepantla* is echoed by data from Frank Garcia, Rudy Ortega, and Brian Pacheco. These three participants consider themselves to be in the middle or in between gender expressions of masculinity and femininity because they each have a tough side and sensitive side. They perceive these dual-sides to his personality to be in the middle and correspondingly the concept of *Nepantla* helps to frame Brian’s view of sensitivity.

Considering the data on sensitivity and analytic themes collectively, moves forward the argument that having a perception of self as sensitive is in opposition to masculinity, in particular, Brown masculinity. Participants reporting such a theme did not feel comfortable showing their sensitive sides because from their experiences, such sensitivity is seen as a feminine trait. Their perception of sensitivity as a feminine personality trait influenced their decision to distance themselves from being sensitive and instead appeared tougher, especially as they aged into adolescence. Appearing tougher allowed them to express what they consider to be a more masculine trait. This salient finding has significant implications for the way in which these Latino males were primed and eventually recruited in the military – a topic of discussion reserved for the next chapter. I now turn to a sample description of the military in the following section.

Military Identity

I use this section to effectively build a bridge between discussion of findings regarding identity and the next section, a discussion on military branches, type of service, and degree attainment. To do so, I discuss an aspect of identity unique to this dissertation – military identity. While at the dissertation proposal stage of my work, I received feedback from one of my committee members, Dr. Leo Estrada, to examine military identity in addition to racial, ethnic, gender and sexual identity. I held on to that note and it weighed heavily as I collected and analyzed data. Such sage advice from Estrada proved fruitful in that it generated its own code and as alluded to earlier in my culminating discussion on ethnic identity, Chicano and military identity worked in concert together in the lives of my study's participants. Indeed, the data spoke to the prominent theme of military identity and under this section I untangle the intersection to underscore how military identity informs their educational experiences.

I first address data capturing an intersection of Chicano and military identity that is similar to the way Juan Enriquez conveyed the intertwining of Chicanismo with military service.³⁰ Only this time, Daniel Sanchez articulated such an intersection when he addressed if he identified as Chicano while actively engaged in military service and went on to explain why. He elaborated:

Yeah. I did. And I think that's because there's a lot of academic writing and just a lot of pictures of back in the day from World War II (referring to literature and photographs of Chicanos in the military). I guess I've heard people referred to as Chicano in the military. Maybe that's why I was comfortable with it. But on the other hand, over here, being a lawyer, working with business people, they don't understand that term as well. It's almost scary to them.

As touched upon earlier in this chapter, I equate Chicano identity with having a progressive political ideology and military identity with having a more conservative political orientation and

³⁰ For the purposes of this dissertation and to avoid sounding repetitive by overusing terms, I use the terms "Chicano identity" and "Chicanismo" interchangeably.

tradition. On the surface, those two identities seem incongruent with one another. However, Daniel's emic perspective as a military veteran, allowed me to further understand the seemingly oppositional identities as ones that are actually compatible with one another. Contrary to my etic view as someone who has not served in the military, Daniel's data also aligns with Juan and Miguel's data from earlier in the chapter, indicating a strong Chicano presence in the military. In Daniel's case, he refers to the strong history of Chicanos serving in the military as his reasoning behind proudly co-identifying as a Chicano Marine. In a humorous yet significant way, he offers contrast to this co-identity by sharing that in his current legal profession, his colleagues are intimidated by attorneys who identify as Chicano. In fact, he muted his strong affiliation with Chicano identity once he became a lawyer. In other words, he toned down his Chicanismo, preferring to identify as Latino instead because as an attorney, in his words, "being Chicano doesn't fit as well" (T9.1.7/26/13).

I now unbraid the intersection of Chicano and military identity to focus on the prevalence of military identity as a theme from my participants' data. Rudy Ortega provided salient data, allowing for a smooth transition of discussion between the conceptual intersection of these two identities over to the centering of only military identity. When asked specifically about his association with military identity, I referenced a Marine bumper sticker he displayed on his truck as a way to broach the subject. I present data from that moment in the interview:

Me: I notice your truck has a bumper sticker. My understanding is that once a Marine, always a Marine. Do you embody that saying?

Rudy: Yes. More because of the way you're viewed here as Latino. If you're driving a nice truck, a nice vehicle and you're Hispanic and you have that music loud, you know that mostly you're getting unwanted attention from people. I feel that they give you this look that you don't deserve to be here. So when you present them with something they see, a Marines sticker, their view changes automatically. It's like, "Oh wow." It's like they totally turn it around.

The data above revealed Rudy's military affiliation was publicly displayed via the decal on his vehicle, identifying him as a Marine. However, such identification was used strategically to shoulder potential racial microaggressions, specifically racial microaggressions that are anti-immigrant and nativist in tone. Rudy's concern over people giving him a look to convey the message he does not belong here because he is Latino is subsided by identifying as a Marine via the decal. He uses his Marine identity to his advantage in this case to thwart racist nativism. Work on the concept of racist nativism allowed me to analyze this social situation under this useful frame (Pérez Huber et al., 2008; Pérez Huber, 2009). The simple act of displaying a bumper sticker with his military affiliation becomes a political act with the aim to assert both his Chicano and military identity. Given the political traditions of Chicanismo, I began to understand through Rudy's experience how the intersection of Chicano and military identity can indeed work in concert with one another.

In an effort to continue unbraiding this intersection, I now leave the Chicano strand to focus explicitly on the strand concerning how my participants perceive their military identity. I start by offering what I consider to be a gem quote from Juan Enriquez who discussed how military identity is tied to the theme of structure. Specifically, he addressed how his military identity is situated in his need to have a space that afforded him structure in his life. When prompted to explain why he needed structure, he explained by providing the analytic connection to structure as follows:

Because it gives order. It defines you. It gives you purpose. From the time you are very young and looking for – at least for me. It gave me an identity. It gave me a definitive identity. You know, I mean, that's it. It gave me a definitive identity at a time when I was so malleable and it gave me a direction to take at the time. That's a scary thing for an 18 year old fresh out of high school. Where now when I knew I wasn't going straight to the UC. I didn't want to go straight into the JC system.

I framed this data as a gem quote because similar to a high-quality gem that can illuminate with its shiny luster, this quote shined a further light on what it means to have a military identity. For Juan, having a strong military identity means having a purpose and the military is an institution that carved out such purpose for him in the form of structure.³¹ This need for structure relates to how Juan conceptualized his use of the term “spiritual warriors” in the epigraph. As a reminder, Juan reasoned that the identity of Chicano males as a group lends itself to a strict and stringent military life because they are already used to hierarchy. It’s important to note, however, that Juan’s rationale should not be interpreted as an overgeneralization of Chicano males.

Intrigued by how Juan was able to saliently reflect on his military identity, I probed further to understand if, how, and why he still identifies with the military. He offered the following explanatory framework for understanding how prevalent his staunch military identity stands out in unexpected ways:

I'm surprised. I will be very honest with you. Like I said I've always been very honest with myself even though painful at times. I'm very self analytical. I have a strong sense of self as a human being. What I believe to be right or not right. I'm not judgmental. I don't impose my views. I'm surprised by how much I still do identify myself as a Marine. I'm so proud of the heritage and so proud of what we do to become one and to be blunt they just do a hell of a job of what some people might called brain washing, indoctrinating.

Data from Juan provided a clear response to my probing on the matter of his current military identity. Indeed, Juan still has a strong perception of self as a military veteran, but more specifically a Marine. Before explaining how and why he still maintained this identity over a decade after completing service, Juan provided context for his explanation. His response laid out his penchant for being analytical to forefront that his rationale for still maintaining a strong military identity was a topic he had given substantial thought toward. This fore fronting of

³¹ As articulated in the methodology chapter, but offered as a reminder here, a code for structure was also used to analyze data. I did not want to risk segueing into a tangential discussion on structure here and consequently, I leave the theme of structure for discussion in a future article.

analytical context speaks to Juan's developed reflexivity. He acknowledged that part of the reason his military identity is so prominent is because of the effectiveness of military indoctrination. It's not lost on Juan that his military identity is a result of a conservative-oriented socialization process running contrary to his more progressive political views informed by a Chicano history and identity.

Juan's data pointing toward oppositional political identities co-existing together is not a singular occurrence. Jorge Barrera and Hector Morales's post-service experiences with military identity align with Juan's experience. In Jorge's case, the theme of military identity organically came up when Jorge began discussing his overall military experience. Framing his experience as generally positive, he began to list the various countries the military exposed him to as he traveled around the world stationed in several military bases. After listing a series of bases, Jorge then hones in on the topic of military identity by stating:

Then my first duty school was Okinawa, Japan and it must be noted: That was the first time in my life that I could come and go as I please. North Carolina was the first time I could go out, have a drink – never in my life before did I have the opportunity. If it was Friday and I had money in my pocket, and in the Marines you always do, I would go explore Okinawa and learn about the culture. I did enjoy going to the different countries. I felt like I was somebody. I felt important. Some friends were okay. When I came home, it felt like I was doing something important in my life.

Though Jorge technically did not use the words "military identity," my coding of this data framed it as aligned with this theme. Of particular relevancy, is Jorge's feeling like he was somebody and important while in the military. Traveling around the world, earning a paycheck, and engaging in social activities germane to adulthood, were all activities he associated with being provided with as a result of being recruited into the military. Jorge culminated his discussion of the two thoughts – feeling like he was somebody, and feeling important – by connecting both ideas seamlessly together, articulating that he felt he was doing something

important in his life. The summative connected idea illustrates the saliency of military identity well beyond the completion of service.

This saliency of military identity after completion of service is further captured in additional data. To facilitate the efficient sharing and analysis of data, I include additional quotes from Jorge Barrera and Hector Morales, but also add previously discussed data as it relates to the way I framed my analysis – external versus internal military identity. For organizational purposes, I list the data under the corresponding column in alphabetical order according to the last name of the participant. In the cases of Jorge and Hector, data are in response to explicit probing on the topic of identity. In response to asking about the role the military aspect of identity plays in their lives currently, the participants share:

Table 5.3: Saliency of Military Identity Post-Service

External Military Identity	Internal Military Identity
<p>Jorge Barrera: I remember once, it was Veterans Day and I didn't have to work that day, but I put my uniform on. I went to South Coast Metro, had a cigar, and I didn't meet anyone there. It was just me by myself. In a way, I was a veteran. I was proud of what I accomplished in the Marines. That was a treat to myself to go out and wear that.</p> <p>Rudy Ortega: So when you present them with something they see, a Marines sticker, their view changes automatically. It's like, "Oh wow." It's like they totally turn it around.</p>	<p>Juan Enriquez: I'm so proud of the heritage and so proud of what we do to become one and to be blunt they just do a hell of a job of what some people might called brain washing, indoctrinating.</p> <p>Hector Morales: Not on a day-to-day basis, but on certain occasions like Memorial or Veterans Day, I do stick my chest out a little more and throw it out there to let people know that I served my country.</p>

Earlier, I shared data indicating Jorge's perception of military identity as being synonymous with feeling important. The data above further illustrates this finding; only this time the data shows the synonymic relationship having a lasting effect well beyond completion of military service. For Jorge, wearing what is known as "Dress Blues" on Veterans Day to commemorate the

holiday visually conveyed feeling proud and important. Similar to Rudy who chose a visual display of his military identity via a vehicle decal, Jorge used optics to cement his publicly display of his military identity. Given the overt public display of military identity, I characterize these examples as external military identity. In the case of Juan, as discussed earlier in this section, his internalized pride of military heritage is what I classify as an example of internal military identity. Similarly, Hector also conveyed a sense of internal military identity. For Hector, internal military identity is a more accurate descriptor because he describes sticking out his chest more during Veterans day as a symbolic gesture and nod toward his service as a Navy sailor.

To finish fleshing out the discussion on military identity, I want to provide an analytic note regarding the transformative impact of Chicana/o Studies on military identity. I turn to yet another gem-quote to illuminate this particular finding from one of my participants, Hector Morales. During my interview with him, I had asked him near the beginning of our dialogue when he first identified as Chicano. He explained that he started identifying as such when he took a Chicana/o Studies course in community college during the 2002-2003 academic year, two years after completing his military service. Hector made it a point to share that prior to taking the class, he was not aware of the social injustices that Chicana/os historically endured and continue to face. Using a reflexive approach toward analyzing his own intersection of identities, Hector explained:

That's a good question actually. But I guess I didn't go into the military with a sense of patriotism and growing up I wasn't like "I'm fucking Mexican." I was just me. After being educated on our people's history and whatnot, it was kind of disconcerting that I second-guessed serving in the first place. That was a small point in my life. It was like Chicano Studies or something. It was just one course. While I was taking this course, I was like "Fuck." I was reading books and I was like "Shit. It's kind of fucked up that I was in the military." I was like "Fuck this country. That's bullshit."

I deliberately end this section with an analysis of this data because the quote effectively connects the aim of this chapter, a discussion on intersectional identities for Chicano and Latino military veterans, with the larger goal of the dissertation, exploring the educational experiences of this group. For Hector, having a critical and transformative educational experience in the form of just one Chicano Studies course allowed him to reframe his identity and view of military service. To better analyze this data, I use research on culturally relevant curriculum from González Cardenas's (2015) who found that her Chicana/o participants experienced a self-transformation as a result of enrolling in Chicana/o Studies coursework.

González Cardenas's work is applicable in helping me make sense of Hector's data, specifically drawing from her work to synthesize Hector's identity across three stages of his life. Data suggests that prior to service and while growing up, Hector lacked a strong sense of either military or Chicano identity. Once he was recruited in to the military as a Sailor in the Navy, he developed a strong sense of military identity, where it continued through post-service until he engaged in a more critical and culturally relevant education in the form of Chicana/o Studies. It was here where he began to distance himself from his military identity in exchange for his take on Chicanismo. Though Hector represents one transformative case, the potential implications for his experience coupled with Gonzalez Cardenas's work, speaks to the power of critical education, specifically ethnic studies in general and Chicana/o studies in particular. My discussion of education in this analysis parlays well into the next complementary section of this chapter where I delve into my participants' military service and educational experiences.

Military Service and Educational Experiences

Service Branch and Type of Service

All but one of my participants enlisted in the Marine branch of the military. This preponderance of participants who gravitated toward the Marines speaks to this service branch serving as an attractive branch to my participants due to the perception of Marines as the most masculine of all the military branches. Indeed, qualitative data underscores this finding and I will pepper this finding throughout the discussion, but here I share a salient point about the reason why the Marine Corps is a particular attractive branch of the military for Latino males. Angel Silva explains:

I don't know if we did any research at all, but I guess the Marines stood out more to me than anything else. It was an elite group. I don't know if it was a recruiter or who it was, but I always felt the Marines were just like the best branch out there. If you were going to join the military, you've got to join the Marines. You either join the Marines or don't do it at all. That was kind of what I felt. Maybe I just heard other people say the Marines are the hardest and the Marines are the first to go. Maybe I just heard that. But I don't know if we decided to join the Marines right then and there. Yeah, I do remember saying that.

Angel's rationalization for selecting the Marines as the branch to enlist speaks to how Marines are perceived in relation to other branches of the military. For Angel, Marines are viewed as an elite group and better than other branches. The quantitative data from chapter four also indicated this branch is smaller than the other branches, adding to this perception of elitism. Angel's insightful data prompted me to engage him in theory building to help explain why Latino males in particular are attracted to join the Marines. When I asked him why he thinks Latinos are groomed to be recruited by the Marines, he provided the following analysis:

If you were to ask me why we all decided to do it, I think it definitely has to do with – because I've known a lot of Latinos who would choose Marines over all the other branches. I feel Latinos in general, we're very proud people. I think we're very proud. I think that has to do with it. That's a big key part of it. We're

very proud. We're also giving. We also like to give back. We like to take people in. The combination of us being proud and wanting to contribute. If you think of the branches of the military, who is the proudest and who is always there and gives back? I think you end up with the same answer every single time. That's just me, with just what I know, not reading or researching or studies. If you were to say, "Angel, what's your best guess of why this happens?" that would be my answer.

Angel's response illuminates how pride and service intersect for him as a way to explain why Latinos are attracted to the Marine branch of the military over other branches. He used the word or variation of "proud" five times in his response, illustrating his conviction toward equating his sense of Latino pride with the level of pride he perceives the Marines have. As Angel sees it, Latinos' sense of pride in addition to a cultural tradition of service echoed by the comment, "We also like to give back," are contributing factors helping to explain why Latinos in his circle preferred to enlist in the Marine Corps. As a side note worth mentioning, the question prompting Angel's response was framed by using a system-based approach toward understanding the recruitment of Latinos as suggested by the use of the concept of grooming to describe said recruitment. However, the wording of his response suggests a more limited, individual-based explanation reflected by the use of term "we all decided." By reframing my question in his response, Angel indirectly shared a view that enlisting in the military is an individual choice. This is in sharp contrast to the perspective I take in this dissertation that considers social context and environmental factors contributing to a priming of Brown boys for military recruitment.

My one participant, Hector Morales, who enlisted in another service branch, the Navy, reported being attracted to this branch because of the plethora of incentives made to him by a Navy recruiter who called him over the phone to make a pitch for this branch. Specifically, Hector recalled:

Like I said, in my head I was like, "I got to go to a four-year college." I never followed through with that. By my junior year, military recruiters were calling

me. It was usually my mom saying, “Hey, some guy from the Marines called you.” Honestly, the Navy recruiter called me and I was like, “Sure. Why not?” Until that phone call, I wasn’t thinking military.

In Hector’s retelling of the way he was recruited into the Navy, what becomes both startling and telling is the level of power and influence recruiters have over the post-secondary education choices for some Latino students. Hector was not considering the military as an option after high school, but he eventually enlisted because a recruiter directly reached out to him via phone. I wanted to understand the level of influence this recruiter had over changing Hector’s post-secondary education plans, especially considering Hector had strong aspiration to attend college after high school. When asking him to elaborate on what made the Navy so attractive for Hector, he reported:

First, it’s getting the hell out of [this city]. I went to visit them and he showed me some of the programs. They had a good Navy corpsman. They had a good medical program for enlisted men versus officers who had to go through college and what not. I was like, “Holy crap.” I just had to sign, go to boot camp, go to this training, and I’m going to have a specific trade profession, I’ll be fine. I could stay in the Navy or get out and I’d have a good job. Solved. I’m in healthcare.

Hector’s reasons for eventually enlisting in the Navy run the gamut, but at the heart of his reasoning is that the Navy recruiter provided him with a pledge he could pursue higher education leading to a good job and economic stability. This harkens back to the principal finding of this dissertation; Latinos like Hector want to pursue higher education and in his case, rely on the military to afford them the potential opportunity to segue from the military to higher education. Interestingly, Hector was the only one who reported the military as providing him with what he deemed to be appropriate resources for him to attend college after his service.

Type of service also distinguishes participants from one another. Eight of my participants served as active duty whereas the other two served as reserves. The chief difference between these two designations is that active duty entails four years of what is akin to full-time

engagement with the military while service in the reserves is synonymous with part-time status. As a reservist, military personnel can engage in outside work, school, and/or other commitments while committed to monthly engagement with the military. Two of the eight that served as active duty personnel also went on to serve as reservists after their active duty service was completed. I designated the two participants who served as both active duty and reservists as “Active/Reserves” to reflect both types of service.

Clearly, a majority of my participants served as active duty service members of the military. For the two participants who served as reserve service members, Miguel Reyes and Brian Pacheco, I probed deeper to understand how and why they enlisted under the reserves program. My culturally intuitive theory-building informed me that a desire to use reserve service to access higher education was possibly one explanation. Theoretical sampling methodology guided by a *Jotería* framework and portraiture allowed me to explore this theme further. In Miguel’s case, he recounted what brought about the decision to enlist as a Marine reservist:

Came back and it was like a week before my birthday, end of August. And then I talked to the recruiter and he’s talking to me about stuff. We’re going through the whole thing and I’m like, “Okay. I like the benefits.” If you go full time, the retirement, your family, because to me it has always been a big thing, making sure I can provide for my family when I ever have one, whether now or when I retire, whenever it is. The military obviously offers that. After 20 years you’re going to retire with full benefits. But then I’m like, “I don’t know if I want to do that full time.” I went in as a reservist. So I’m like, “But that’s like full time” and he was like, “We also have the reserve program.” He talked to me about that, which is exactly the same program up to the point where you finish your school. So once you finish your specialty, then as a reservist you go back home and you report to your station once a month. As an active duty Marine, you go to your duty station and that’s where you’re at for whatever...two, three or four years and they might move you in that timeframe or whatever it is.

To allow for context, the person he was referring to when he said “came back” was a close friend of his who had enlisted in active duty as a Marine. His close friend had returned to the community and was asked by military recruiters to specifically recruit Miguel. Asking a close

friend of Miguel's to recruit him is yet another example of the tailored and effective recruitment strategies employed by the military. Further contextualizing the recruitment environment for Miguel were his parents who recently pressured him to do more with his life. In Miguel's words, "My parents are like, 'You've got to do something. Stop wasting your time. You've got to do something.' That's their guidance. Their guidance isn't 'How can we help you?' Their guidance is 'Figure it out and do something.'" Subsequently, the strategic recruitment by a friend, coupled with added pressure from parents and a prior schooling environment that groomed him to be recruited, resulted in Miguel considering the military as a post-secondary education trajectory. Similar to Hector Morales's Navy recruitment pitch, Miguel was attracted to the potential economic stability and college opportunities the military would provide for him. When compared to the 20 hours a week he was working at a local amusement park, the financial opportunity looked particularly enticing to Miguel.

Considering a relative lack of participants who were reservists as opposed to active duty personnel in my study, I thought it would be prudent to delve deeper into understanding Miguel's decision to enlist as a reservist. Specifically, I honed in on what attracted him to choose the reserve program over active duty. He explained:

Miguel: Obviously to me the biggest thing at first was, like I said, just the benefits. If you're in there long enough, you get a pension, you get to take care of your family, things of that nature. Those are the things that I really valued at that time. I still value them but those were the things that I was looking for. At that point, to me it was great, but if I don't want to do this full time and I can do it part time, they still pay for some of your school. So there are still benefits to be had. You just don't do it full time.

Me: So the payment of your school was an interest for you?

Miguel: It was because it would allow me to go to school. I didn't have a specific goal at that time. I didn't know whether I was going to go or wasn't going to go but it's nice that they offered it and I know I can use it.

I didn't know how it worked. I didn't know I would lose the benefit if I didn't use it, which is exactly what happened to me.

Miguel's reference to school was a key point during the interview, a point I narrowed in on like a laser due to the primary interest of my dissertation – the educational experiences of Latino men. Similar to my comments in the section on sexual identity where I state discourse on sexuality tend to be overlooked in research, traditional theoretical frames risk overlooking if and how Latino males value education. My framework allowed me to probe further, knowing that if I framed the question and maneuvered my probing in a culturally respectful way, themes such as the valuing of education would come up. In Miguel's case, his valuing of education indeed came up as he articulated a reason for enlisting in the reserves was for the education benefits entitled to him in exchange for service.

Unfortunately, I learned later in the interview that he lost his benefits because of his status as a reservist and a failure of the military sharing with him that GI bill education benefits expire if not used during the time spent as a reservist. Following off and on stints in community college throughout his tenure as a reservist, Miguel eventually completed six years of service. When he eventually returned to school, he was informed he no longer could use his GI bill benefits for higher education because they expired. To clarify his experience, I asked Miguel if anyone in the military had ever told him that his benefits expire. He conclusively and angrily states, "No. So what happens is six years come by, I've gone on an off, I go back to school and I ask about it. 'Oh no, that's expired.' What do you mean expired? Nobody told me it expires." The gravity of accumulating benefits earmarked for college over the course of six years only to have them unknowingly expire adds insult to injury. As of this writing, Miguel has accumulated 36 units of community college units with aspirations to complete his degree, but given his loss of GI bill benefits and work obligations, his goal to earn a bachelor's degree is difficult.

Brian Pacheco was the other participant who enlisted as a Marine reservist. He approached the decision-making process for enlisting in the military as a practical matter because it would afford him the financial opportunity to attend college. His reasoning for choosing this route was rather matter of fact when he explained,

I wasn't really fond about going to war. I was patriotic as far as they came down to it, but I'm not going to put myself in a position – I never wanted to kill anybody. I know there was a greater chance. I also picked a field that would help educate me at the same time and have less chance of actually going to combat.

Brian's last statement in the data is particularly telling of his strategic decision to enlist as a reservist as a way to minimize the likelihood of him participating in action in time of war. Instead, he made an informed decision and committed to six years of reserve duty while working with his trade, electronic communications radio. Unfortunately, the information provided to him was not completely accurate as he later discovered, "the monetary part for college was very limited compared to the ones that went full time" (T8.22). Brian reported being misled by the military recruiters, specifically stating he was told he could work in whichever trade he would like, only to learn later that his trade was tied to his ASVAB score. One of the deceptive tactics Brian specifically described was "they tried to find something that you wanted and they kind of played on that." In Brian's case, he wanted to be a Marine so he could have money to pursue higher education and as a result, the recruiters couched a bait and switch tactic on him by promising an ideal job while in the military and the same GI bill benefits as an active duty service member.

Degree Completion

To round out discussion of my participants in this chapter and end on the topic of their education, I want to share information about their degree completions. My participant criteria specified that I wanted to interview military veterans who enrolled in some type of higher education program while serving or after completion of service. In my methodology chapter, I purposefully defined “higher education” broadly in order to include participants who enrolled in vocational-based programs and I did not require participants to have completed degrees in order to qualify for my study. Part of the rationale for this was that a pilot study revealed participants were having a difficult time completing degrees. As communicated by table 5.1, only one of my participants, Daniel Sanchez, completed his baccalaureate and I must note that this participant began his higher education before military service. Two other participants completed their Associate of Arts degrees. Jorge Barrera completed his AA degree, transferred to a four-year university but was pushed out a year before graduating. Frank Garcia completed his AA in a Culinary Arts program. The remaining participants attempted community college, completed a vocational-based program, or have taken courses beyond the high school degree but coursework did not culminate in a bachelor’s degree. A more parceled out discussion of my participants’ academic trajectories will be elaborated on with the help of the portrait and analysis of additional data in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In finalizing my discussion of findings, I return to the theme that guided my development of arguments made in this chapter – Spiritual Warriors. Juan Enriquez first brought the theme to my attention as a way to creatively describe and categorize Chicano and Latino military veterans.

To unpack Juan’s intended meaning of Spiritual Warriors from the epigraph, I sketched out a visual representation in the form of the following conceptual map depicted as Figure 5.1:

Figure 5.1: Conceptual Map of Spiritual Warrior



The conceptual map was particularly helpful in helping me wade through the metaphorical forest elucidated by Juan’s thick description of my participants as Spiritual Warriors. Through the help of Juan’s Spiritual Warrior metaphor, his fellow participant’s data as well as his own, and my theoretical framework, I was able to fashion together a definition of Spiritual Warriors to mean:

Chicano and Latino youth who grow up in an ecological context (e.g. urban, barrio, or rural) where they face a traumatic and tough upbringing brought about by racialized, gendered, and sexualized experiences that imprint an intersection of identities. Such an experience can result in a habitus aligned with the institutional needs of the military. Traits that are especially coveted include loyalty and a penchant for a structured, hierarchical lifestyle.

I identified such an intersection of identities through the data and my use of Spiritual Warriors as both a theme and lens further aided me in conclusively addressing the main research question for this chapter. To conclude, identity influences the educational experiences of Chicano and Latino

military veterans by acting as a form of habitus³², what Bourdieu (1998) referred to as “a socialized body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world and in turn structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world” (p. 81). For my participants, such a habitus was aligned with the ecological context of growing up in an urban setting, or what some of my participants referred to as a *barrio*. In turn, this specific habitus gleaned from the intersection of their identities as Spiritual Warriors operated as a mechanism to be recruited into the military because as an institution, the military provides an indoctrinating space where my participants’ bodies as Spiritual Warriors are coveted.

Now that I have articulated the concept of Spiritual Warriors via data, theory-driven analysis, and concluding remarks, in the next chapter, I will present, discuss, and analyze qualitative data from one of my participants, Jorge Barrera. Presented as a portrait, the discussion of Jorge’s educational experiences is couched in the context of his life story. This method allows for complexity to earmark specific themes that are apparent in his academic development that leads him to be recruited into the military in spite of his retrospective desire to attend college. I chose Jorge for a portrait because his life story chiefly underscores the theme and title of the upcoming chapter – Ask ‘Em, Tell ‘Em About College.

³² I was first introduced to the concept of habitus through the work of Dr. Patricia M. McDonough. Her research applied the concept of habitus toward helping explain college choice decision-making. Her work in sociology of education helped plant conceptual seeds allowing me to connect habitus to my research.

Chapter 6
**Ask ‘Em, Tell ‘Em About College: A Portrait on Reframing the
Educational Paradigm for Chicano and Latino Students**

Definitely college. Definitely a degree. Definitely not — I didn’t picture myself in the situation I am now, financially, where I am barely making it. Where I am unemployed. Where I am barely scraping by. What I envisioned was my degree and a good paying career....but I think if you were to have asked me in 2000 when I got out of the Marines what I was going to do with my life, my goal was to get into a UC .

– Jorge Barrera, 33 year old Marine veteran

The redacted excerpt above from one of my interviews cements the central theme guiding the fruition of this chapter.³³ I use it to frame the primary finding discussed in this section of my dissertation, which is that the corpus of participants all reported the following imperative to education academics and practitioners: **public schools need to improve the quality, accuracy, and frequency of college access information and outreach to Latino males.** In response to this call to action, I flip the paradigm reflected in my main title for this dissertation, “Don’t Ask ‘Em, Don’t Tell ‘Em About College,” by directly stating, “Ask ‘Em, Tell ‘Em About College” as a way to effectively state we need to afford college access resources to Latino students across the education pipeline. More specifically, in this chapter, I start to delve into addressing the more qualitative-oriented research questions for this dissertation. This chapter is chiefly concerned with the research question about life stories. Offered as a reminder, my research question asks: **How do the life stories of Latino military veterans who graduated from an Orange County high school in the mid-90s shape their educational experiences?**

The highlight of this chapter shares a portrait from one of my research participants. This portrait conveys the life story and ushers in the central themes that were uncovered as a result of the coding process. Though many themes were revealed through inductive and deductive means

³³ A lengthier version of this excerpt will appear later in this chapter for more thorough analysis and discussion. In addition to using it to frame the chapter, the redacted version is used here for stylistic and creative writing purposes.

guided by a *Jotería* approach, one of the more salient themes forming the crux of this chapter is that education matters in the lives of these Latino men. Education mattered when they were children, it mattered as adolescents, it mattered while they were in the military, it mattered as young adults and it matters now to participants who have children, especially those that have sons.³⁴ This theme is focused on because it begins to challenge the misconception that Latinos, in particular Latino males, do not value education. On the contrary, not only do Latino males value education, but they value it so much they are willing to potentially lose their lives for it as a result of joining the military and potentially go to war.

This chapter positions a portrait from one of my participants to extrapolate the primary theme of education. Secondary themes such as military recruitment tactics and factors that influenced participants to enlist in the military will also be teased out as a result of the rich qualitative data guided life story. At the culmination of the portrait, invoking the analytic frame of *Jotería* will provide a discussion of the portrait. Additional qualitative data from participants will also be provided to bolster the arguments made by the portrait. Finally, I end this chapter by commenting on how a life story discussed as a portrait provide conceptual lens to help inform the literature regarding the educational experiences of Latino military veterans.

³⁴ I intentionally use a more informal voice in this particular statement in order to drive home the point the important and insightful finding that education is important in the lives of the Latino male veterans interviewed for this study. A temporary switch in voice underscores the importance of this statement and it is reflective of a charge put forth to education policy makers in a speech.

Portrait of Jorge Barrera

Internal Context: The Physical Setting

In sketching the context, the portraitist captures the details of the physical setting, hoping to create a picture into which the reader will feel drawn – a palpable picture that allows the reader to see, feel, smell, and touch the scene.

-Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis

Sitting on the corner of the bed, I took a moment to look around Jorge's room as he excused himself to take a restroom break during the interview. The room felt stuffy, but definitely conveyed a sense of home for Jorge and his two sons who live with him. Photos of a two rambunctious boys, both under the age of ten, decorated the walls and dresser. One framed photo of the three of them proudly showed a stocky Latino father with a classic fade haircut hugging his sons, each boy displaying an infectious grin and mopy black hair. Their toys littered the floor in a way that might be mistaken for messy, but it was more of a sign that Jorge was actively involved with his children – sometimes playing toy cars with them while at other times donning a cape to imagine being superheroes. Considering Jorge managed to creatively squeeze in enough clothes, toys, books, frames, and kitchen supplies for a family of three, I admired Jorge's resilience to provide the best for his children.

Drawing from Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) portraiture, such resilience can be seen as an expression of goodness. In other words, in spite of vivid economic hardships, Jorge works hard as a single father of two children to provide, spend time, and nurture them. These are examples of strengths that encapsulate goodness, a search "for what is good and healthy and assumes that the expression of goodness will always be laced with imperfections" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The imperfections in Jorge's case became evident when he returned from his restroom break and in a cathartic moment during the interview he let out a long exhale and vented:

I would've never envisioned myself unemployed, barely scraping by, collecting unemployment, collecting food stamps, being in the food program. Never in my life would I have thought that a Marine with an honorable discharge with an Associate of Arts degree could end up where I'm at – feeling inadequate, that I'm underemployed, feeling that I have so much to give, so much talent, so much capabilities and no where to work and be rewarded for them. I would've never wanted to be who I am today. Looking back from a Marine point of view, looking back from a college education point of view, never in my entire life would I have pictured myself renting a bedroom for \$400 from a family that doesn't have half of the ability or half of the potential that I do.

Jorge's catharsis filled the room with an air of thickness that was palpable to me. Such thickness was fueled by Jorge's frustration. Having served as a Marine and completed some higher education units gave him the impression that the training cultivated from those two experiences should have led him to a more economically prosperous situation than the one he found himself in at the time of the study. To further understand what brought Jorge to this cathartic moment, I must venture into his life story. It is the close "listening for a story" that allows me to understand how Jorge not only is shaped by the context, but how he gives it shape (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997).

Historical Context: Journey, Culture, and Ideology

As the oldest and only male consisting of two other siblings, Jorge immigrated to the United States from Mexico as a child. His mother and father were both in the picture as he grew up in what he considered to be a working class upbringing. Jorge's father graduated from a university in México, but after immigrating to the US worked as a mechanic out of the family home. Jorge's mother worked as a teacher's aide for the local school district. Eventually, as a result of taking community college courses, Jorge's mom worked as a special education paraeducator.

Due to Jorge's strong cultural affinity for Mexican and American culture, he ethnically identifies as Chicano. Specifically, he describes his Chicano identity as the following hybridity of ethnic markers:

I like the title Chicano, even though my mom disagrees with me being a Chicano. I was born in Mexico City. I lived there until I was six with my grandparents and my mom. Then we came when I was five or six, but I grew up on Mr. Rogers and Sesame Street... I embrace Chicano because I'm not Mexican the way Mexicans see me. I'm not American enough to be American. I'm a Chicano. I always embraced being a Chicano because I don't speak Spanish the way my cousins do. I don't have an elaborate vocabulary. I don't feel comfortable, if I had to give some sort of presentation to other people that are Mexican, educated, born and raised in Mexico, I don't think I have the same caliber of words or vocabulary that I would in English. And my experience as a Latino, being in America, or being in the United States, you know, being from Mexico, really is the fabric of who I am. And I am not Billy Bob from Kentucky either, but I'm right in the middle.

Though Jorge clearly sums up his ethnic identity using a humorous take on articulating Chicanismo as reflected by him eschewing white American identity, his insightful description does underscore the "living in between" nature of being Chicano. A *Jotería* lens draws from Anzaldúa's Borderlands theory to further tease out the intricacies of Chicano identity. Specifically, Anzaldúa underscores a concept she refers to as *Nepantla* to mean "the in-between." Clearly, in Jorge self-description of his ethnic identity, he articulates a racial identity occupying a space that is in between or as Anzaldúa puts it, "Ni de aqui, Ni de alla/Not from Here, Nor from There."³⁵

In addition to identifying as Chicano, Jorge also identifies as a straight man who grew up working class. However, both his sexual and class identities merit further elaboration due to the complexities of such social locations. Though Jorge technically identifies as straight he offers a nuanced discussion of his sexuality when asked to reflect on this topic. He elaborates:

³⁵ This comment has also become a popularized term amongst Chicanos that further illustrates the sentiment that Chicanos internalized borders that denote a sense of identity that is in between a state of Mexican and American identity. In other words, a hybrid identity.

Uhm, I'm straight. I did have a time where, I had so many people around me, since I think, I think around high school, the Marine Corps and after, you know going into the work force, where people would always ask me if I was gay. Are you gay? Why are you gay? Are you sure you're gay? My mom would ask me I think once a year, you know, for the last five years if I was gay and I found myself wondering, why is everyone around me thinking that I am. So I experimented with a friend of mine and I think in conclusion that's not who I am. But I was kind of happy to find out that not necessarily happy but I was, but I'm at peace finally knowing exactly who I am and what I want and what isn't for me. Because I think the physical act of being together with another man would be uncomfortable or wouldn't be satisfying to me. Or being and receiving in that way just doesn't appeal to me, but I can appreciate how another person can be your best friend and make you feel like you're worth gold. But in a way I'm happy to find out where I'm at.

In Jorge's description of his sexuality, he separates his preferred sexual orientation descriptor from his past behavior. At first, his hesitation at responding to my question regarding his sexual identity is met with the linguistic filler, "uhm", as he searched for a way to answer the question. Jorge eventually conveyed he considers himself straight, but he comfortably admitted he engaged in same-sex behavior in the past as a way to experiment and come to terms with his preferred straight identity. This revelation about his more complicated sexuality touches on the power of *Jotería* as method – one of the tools I used as the portraitist with the goal of having Jorge feel comfortable opening up about his sexuality. Sharing a similar racial, ethnic, gender, and class positionality as Jorge, allowed for him to divulge aspects to his life and identity that he may not have otherwise share if my portraitist shoes were filled by someone else occupying a different positionality. My sexual identity as an openly gay man also helped me strategically and respectfully traverse through research terrain, in this case, sexuality, that may be overlooked by a straight portraitist. In sum, my epistemological approach toward eliciting data on sexual identity allowed for a pivotal moment when Jorge felt at ease sharing a vignette on his sexual exploration with another man.

Regarding Jorge's social class identity, he described his economic upbringing as being low income because of his parents' working class background. He often conveyed social class identity relative to the economic background of his peers in schools. Descriptions such as "feeling less than," occupying the "bottom of the barrel", and "not dressing like the white kids and rich kids dressed in school," were peppered throughout the interview as reflections of his economic status growing up. These excerpts from the interview are very telling of the hardships Jorge endured as a result of growing up poor. Such nuggets of economic reflections will be elaborated in context in this portrait because they help explain his military recruitment trajectory.

Jorge's mother had high academic aspirations for him as evidenced by her consistent educational advocacy. To illustrate, Jorge's mother first enrolled him in San Pedro Elementary School for first grade³⁶. Unsatisfied with the quality of education Jorge was receiving, his mother then transferred him to Wilmington Elementary School for second and third grade. Still unsatisfied with the rigor of education that Jorge was obtaining, his mother transferred him to Carter Elementary School for the remainder of his elementary schooling. Unsatisfied with public schools in general, Jorge's mother decided to enroll him at a private religious school referred to as Christian Academy. In trying to understand the rationale behind Jorge's mother transferring him to so many schools in a short period of time, Jorge tells me:

It was my mom's habit. She would try to get me to a better school, a better school, a better school. If she didn't like one school, she'd move me into another school. And since she knew people in the district, she can pull strings and make things happen.

The repetition of the phrase, "better school," verbally illustrated the importance and emphasis his mom placed on ensuring that Jorge received a quality education. Clearly, Jorge's mother played the role of an educational advocate who played a crucial role in determining his schooling

³⁶ I use a pseudonym when referring to this school and any other subsequent schools attended by participants for this study.

trajectory. The emphasis on obtaining a better school for Jorge underscores the high academic aspirations that his mother had for him. Such high aspirations interrupt the deficit-charged discourse that attempt to paint Latino parents as not having high academic aspirations for their children. On the contrary, Jorge's mother in particular not only had high aspirations, but also was engaged with the school to ensure that Jorge maximized schooling opportunities within the context of his working class reality.

Additional data from interviews will be triangulated in the next section of this chapter to further bolster this finding. Finally, it is important to note that the strings Jorge alludes to are in reference to the social connections that his mother acquired, resulting from her work as a para-educator for the school district. Such social capital allowed Jorge's mother better access to transform advocacy into action as is evidenced by the multiple transfers of schools throughout Jorge's personal educational pipeline. In other words, Jorge's mother holds education in high regards. This finding invokes the central theme identified in the introduction of this chapter – **education matters**. Specifically, Jorge's mother utilized resources within her means to advocate for a high-quality education for her son.

In spite of Jorge's mother's attempt to secure a quality education at Christian Academy, Jorge's mom also grew dissatisfied with the education he was receiving at the middle school. Subsequently, Jorge left Christian Academy and re-enrolled in a public school, only this time it was fundamental middle school that stressed a traditional approach toward teaching and learning. Specifically, the emphasis of his new place of learning, Jackson Fundamental Middle School, was on teaching reading, writing and mathematics. Jorge completed his middle school education at Jackson and then enrolled at Bayside High School. In tenth grade, Jorge transferred to Orange County High School where he finally asserted his own influence over which school he attended.

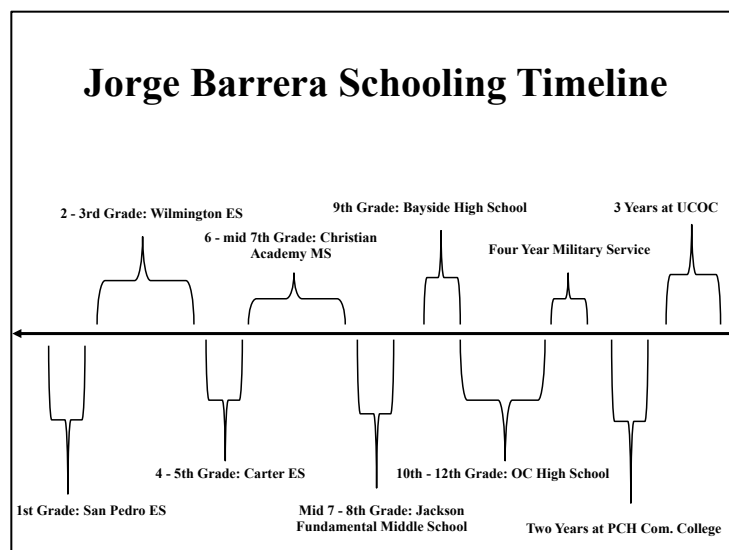
Jorge describes that he finally found a school where he was comfortable at, fit in, and immersed in extracurricular activities. He further explains how he reached the point where he was tired of transferring schools:

But yeah, my mom kind of did whatever she wanted (pause, as in reflection). She held me back in 6th grade, uhm, even though the teachers at Christian Academy felt they could move me on to 7th, she held me back. And uhm, I didn't like the experience. I didn't like, you know, on top of being the kid with the Payless shoes, I got to be the kid that got held back and that stayed with me. (tears up while talking). But finally when I got to Orange County High School I made it a point to tell my mom I wasn't going to switch schools again just because I didn't have any real friends. I didn't have that stability or that nice, nice feeling you get when you see your friends the next year and the next year. And, they know you. What you're about.

Data reveal that Jorge asserted his own decision-making over which school to attend in high school due to his yearning for a stable set of friends. OCHS was his seventh school since entering public schools in the US in first grade. Constantly transferring schools made it difficult for him to establish close friends. Arguably, having close friends, especially male friends is important in adolescent development.

The following graphic in Figure 6.1 portrays Jorge's schooling trajectory in the form of a timeline:

Figure 6.1



After graduating from high school, Jorge was recruited to enlist in the Marine Corps branch of the military where he served four years of active-duty. Once he completed his active duty service, he enrolled at his local community college where he successfully earned his Associate of Arts degree and transferred to University of California Orange County (UCOC). While at UCOC, he completed three years of schooling before being pushed out within one year of graduating.

Throughout Jorge's schooling, he encountered pivotal moments that culminated in him being primed so he could be recruited into the military. When asked about his earliest recollection of interacting with the military he describes:

I think it was in second or third grade that I went to a color ceremony where they present the flags and the Marines march in and they do their color ceremony, it's called. And I was just completely moved by the way the men marched, the Marines marched, uhm without blinking an eye. They looked like robots in perfect synchronization and I was just, you know, I was completely in awe. You know and something happened. I was completely amazed and captivated and I wanted that.

Given the information he provided for his schooling timeline and coupled with the data from the excerpt above, I concluded that Jorge's earliest priming in schools occurred when he attended Wilmington Elementary School at the age of seven or eight years old, placing him at a stage of human development referred to as childhood. In his description of his earliest memory of being exposed to the military in school Jorge notes how captivated he was with observing a color guard ceremony. At such a young age, children are very impressionable and witnessing a color guard ceremony was the starting point for a long process of priming within a school context. From the description Jorge provided, I concluded that the recruitment of Latino males into the military

starts as early as primary school. I further argue that this recruitment is characterized as a form of priming for later more direct recruitment by the military.

In revisiting my introductory chapter of this dissertation, I outlined conditions and principles that describe military-going culture in high schools. Data from this dissertation suggests that military-going culture is not unique to high schools, but rather such culture may be germane to certain public school across the pipeline, including elementary and middle schools. In the case of Jorge's elementary school, holding a military color guard ceremony suggests his elementary school had a military-going culture. Specifically, data from Jorge's interview in conjunction with data from other participants that I will share later to argue that conditions and principles reflective of military-going culture are embodied within the daily practices of public schools with sizeable Latino populations.

In addition to childhood, adolescence for Jorge also proved to be a particularly tough time for him. Economic challenges were exacerbated by his schooling experiences in middle school. He found himself alone as one of very few Latinos at Christian Academy Middle School, a private religion-affiliated school. Wells of heavy tears started to fill Jorge's eyes when remembering the challenges of being a numeric racial minority in a sea of whiteness. Jorge began to weave a tapestry of microaggressions that he endured while at Christian Academy. In between tears and sorrow, he shares:

I was the only, one of the only Latinos, there was a handful of Latinos there, you know, very slim, only a handful of Latinos there, but the Latinos that were there were rich, affluent, you know wearing their Nike Jordans. Wearing nice shoes, they fit in with the lifestyle all the other students seemed to share. And my parents worked hard and got me into that school, but they couldn't afford the Nikes, or the Reeboks, or the little pumps, and I always felt ridiculed, I always felt like I was less than they were. I always felt like I didn't fit in because most of the school was Anglo. And affluent, and not only Anglo, but rich, where they talked about going to Glamour, their expensive bikes, their surfing. Some

of the families owned...I just felt like I was surrounded by a ton of rich people and I don't remember who it was, but one of the pastor's kids told me to "go back to Mexico." And I just, I just felt like, I didn't belong at all.

This rich description, albeit problematic, of Jorge's experience at Christian Academy illuminates several themes that are central to my overall findings. Several encounters with microaggressions are conveyed in the data. One way to interpret such data is to view the comment, "go back to Mexico," as a racial microaggression. Indeed it was a microaggression, but an intersectional analysis reveals much more context, nuance, and layers to this verbal assault. Though on the surface, Jorge's racial background as a Latino was the focus of the microaggression, *Jotería* unbraids the complicated set of social constructs that the microaggression actually targeted.

Explicitly, I argue that this type of microaggression is not only marked by a racialized typology, but also classed and nativist in its tri-pronged approach toward inflicting dominance and marginalization over Jorge as a Brown male student. By using "Brown" as a racial descriptor for Jorge as opposed to "Latino," I intentionally stress how his appearance as a Brown male of color acts as a visual cue for the perpetrator of the microaggression to use as a signifier to inflict such a layered microaggression.

Conclusion

Using Jorge Barrera's life story as indexed in the portrait, revealed several findings related to his educational experience. His portrait can serve as a form of case study exemplar reflective of my other participants' life stories. Given Jorge's extensive indexing of education, I found that he personally places a high value on education and his family, especially his mother values education. His academic trajectory as captured in both the portrait and Figure 6.1, his schooling timeline, illustrated such high value placed on education. To be more nuanced, there is

a particular value placed on higher education and my framework accounted for probing to elicit this high value placed on education. As a matter of social justice, I use this finding to argue that higher education matters in the lives of Chicano and Latino military veterans and the particular life story of Jorge Barrera speaks to this point. As a result, the traditional deficit-oriented view that Chicano and Latino students do not value education requires challenging under a new paradigm. The data captured in this chapter speaks to a reframing of the educational paradigm for Chicano and Latino students to one that recognizes them as valuing education in a cultural-specific way that was teased out through the power of *Jotería* as a framework. Indeed, education matters for Brown boys and higher education matters for Brown men.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Toward a Brown Masculinity Priming for Military Recruitment

“¡Eduardo! ¡Eduardo!” Upon hearing a woman calling my name, complete with Spanish pronunciation, I swirled back around right before opening the door to the sandwich shop attached to the courthouse. My eyes, instantly fixated on a Latino family of three, comprised of a woman, a man who I assumed to be her husband, and her son who appeared to be around eighteen or nineteen years old. His youthful yet grown facial features gave away the fact that he left adolescence behind not too long ago, but had not fully settled into his new developmental home – manhood.

The woman who called my name looked at me excitedly as the three family members reached out to give me a warm embrace. I must admit, I did not immediately recognize them and assumed the young man was perhaps a former college student of mine. However, as soon as I embraced them, the familiar feel of kinship served as a kinetic reminder as to who this family was – they were my familia. The woman was my maternal aunt who I hadn’t seen in years, nor had I seen her husband and the last time I saw my cousin was when he was in middle school. But there was no mistaking them for anyone else other than my kin. The warm embrace confirmed our blood ties.

As is the familial custom of taking care of your own, my aunt quickly offered me a seat at their table and offered to buy me lunch. We then ensued on catching up as we broke bread together. Considering my aunt, uncle and cousin did not live in the same city I live in, they weren’t here for the generic-chain sandwiches, but rather attending to business in court. My cousin’s fancy suit and tie also gave that away, but I dared not ask about the legal issue my cousin was confronting because the air between me and my family communicated, “this subject is off limits.”

However, I did ask what my cousin was up to now that he had recently graduated high school. My aunt, a hard-working undocumented immigrant who has spent her lifetime cleaning homes to put food on the table for her family, beamed with pride, “Mijo, se var ir al Army./My son is going to the Army.” Upon hearing the news, I felt conflicted. There I was, months away from finishing this dissertation on the topic of the education of Latinos in the military – learning about the way some Latino male students are primed into the military industrial complex and feeling a sense of obligation to share with my aunt, uncle and cousin the educational risks involved in enlisting in the military – but instead, to avoid deflating the look of pride as my aunt announced the news, I sat on my trove of findings and offered my felicidades.

I end this dissertation in a similar manner to how I started this work – with a life story.

The epigraph I share in this chapter captures a situation that I serendipitously experienced a few months prior to the completion of this work. It is not lost on me that in spite of years of culling

research on my dissertation's topic, I found it difficult to impart this knowledge with my own family members for concern that I would ruin an organic celebratory moment. However, I rely on this moment taken from my own life story to add another layer of context that I omitted from making explicit in the telling of Juan Enriquez's portrait. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) calls this, personal context: the researcher's perch and perspective. She elaborates on it by explaining "It is not only important for the portraitist to paint the contours and dimensions of the setting, it is also crucial that she sketch herself into the context" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997). Though also not explicit, this personal context has been embedded throughout the writing of this dissertation as well – the theoretical framework I used, the writing style I employed, and the research design I implemented all speak to the personal context I brought to the inquiry table.

My personal context is informed by an unapologetic³⁷ commitment to increasing access of higher education to Chicana/os and Latina/os in general, but Chicanos and Latinos in particular. My work aims to disrupt the Latino Military Recruitment Pipeline I identified in Chapter 4. My findings from Chapter 5 where I discussed the intersection of identities as Spiritual Warriors inform the field of educational sociology on how my participants occupied a form of habitus – a habitus aligned with the institutional needs of the military. Conclusions reached in Chapter 6 allowed for a reframing of the educational paradigm for Chicano and Latinos as Brown bodies that place a high value on pursuing higher education.

By placing all these findings together in a cohesive conceptual contribution to the field, I developed a model depicting how Chicanos and Latinos, framed as Brown Masculinity, are primed for recruitment by the time they reach high school. Such priming continues in high

³⁷ My Chair, Dr. Daniel Solórzano, commonly uses the word unapologetic in his framing of lectures concerning his commitment to critical race theory, social justice, and equity in education for Chicana/os, Latina/os and People of Color. In admiration, inspiration and in an homage to his mentorship, I now find myself adopting one of his signature words to frame some of my own work.

schools, especially schools having military-going cultures as articulated in the introduction of this dissertation. To arrive at my conceptual model, I revisit my research questions as I lead up to my conceptual contribution.

Revisiting My Research Questions and Discussion of Limitations

As a way to understand the military recruitment pipeline for Latina/os, what are the recruitment rates for this group?

Concluding Statement. Before arriving at the qualitative data, I wanted to learn about the military recruitment rates of Latina/os as a way to understand the broad context under which this population is recruited. Using a *Jotería* lens, I also wanted to learn about racial, ethnic, and gender demographics across military branches in order to also yield further context. The culmination of the chapter provided a Latino Military Recruitment Pipeline. Based on an analysis of quantitative data from the Fiscal Year 2010 Report of Population Representation in the Military Services, I calculated 0.5% of Latina/os aged 18 – 24 were recruited into the military. Their Non-Latina/o counterparts were recruited at 0.55% of the population of 18 – 24 year olds, concluding that Latina/os were recruited to a slightly lesser degree than Non-Latina/os. When considering only Latinas, 0.2% of their group aged 18 – 24 were recruited into the military, a percentage that is slightly higher than the 0.18% of Non-Latinas in the same age range who were recruited. When only Latinos are considered, 0.78% of this group aged 18 – 24 were recruited into the military. This percentage is lower than the 0.92% of Non-Latinos recruited into the military.

The aforementioned recruitment rates give the false illusion that demographic inequalities for Latina/os do not exist in the military. On the contrary, other forms of quantitative analyses unmasked sharp inequalities, surprisingly most pronounced for Latinas relative to Latinos. The

sharpest inequality found was that 26% of recruited female Navy Sailors identified as Latina in 2010, whereas only 18% of female 18 – 24 year old civilians identified as Latina. When considering all military branches in aggregate, 19% of all women recruited identified as Latina, a percentage that is also higher than what is found in the civilian comparison group. Latinos are also over-represented in the Navy when compared to their civilian counterparts. Specifically, 23% of male Sailors identified as Latinos yet only 19% of 18 - 24 year old civilian males identified as Latino. That said, only 16% of all male military recruits identified as Latino, a demographic composition that is lower than the comparison civilian group. In light of these statistics, my final finding depicted a Latino Military Recruitment Pipeline showing that out of 100 male military recruits, 16 are Latino. Five of those 16 Latinos become Soldiers, five more become Sailors, three become Marines and another three become Air Men.

Limitations. The calculations and corresponding analyses of the data in Chapter 4 solely used a data set based on fiscal year 2010 the US Department of Defense. Subsequently, it would be more informative to find out if the demographics in my findings remain consistent in other years or if particular demographic trends occurred during particular periods of military conflict. Another limitation is that the data set regarding Latina/os as an ethnicity as opposed to a race. This limited my ability to directly compare my demographics to White Non-Latina/os or any other race for that matter.

How does identity influence the educational experiences of Latino military veterans?

Concluding Statement. My conceptual map of the theme Spiritual Warriors provided me with an effective way to couch the data and through the help of a *Jotería* framework, analyze the intersection of identities as expressed during interviews of ten Chicano and Latino military veterans. The crux of my findings revealed that Chicano and Latino military veterans

experienced an intersection of identities that I conceptualized as a habitus. Such a habitus was aligned with the ecological context of growing up in the urban context of my participants, but I theorized that such a context also lends itself to other ecologies, such as rural communities. Naming this intersection of identities, Spiritual Warriors, I also found that the institutional needs of the military covet young Latino men as a result of their habitus and corresponding traits such as a socialized need for structure, in other words a militarized lifestyle.

Limitations. Though the depth of the interviews were clearly rich in data aiding me to develop equally rich theories and concepts, further interviews are needed to determine if my theorizing holds water beyond the experiences of my ten participants. Given my sampling criteria, it's not lost on me that interviewing Chicano and Latino military veterans who completed their service ten years, sometimes more, after completing their tenure with the military risks memories becoming distant. However, in some cases there is an advantage to their being a relative large window of time between their military service and time of interviews. Due to their maturity, my participants manifested reflexivity, which contributed to the depth of the data. Subsequently, even my identified limitation can be reframed as contributing factor in obtaining such rich data.

How does the life story of a Latino military veteran who graduated from an Orange County high school in the mid-90s shape his post-secondary academic trajectory?

Concluding Statement. The methodology of portraiture, coupled with a *Joteria* perspective, allowed for a throughout analysis of the life story selected as an exemplar from the group of study participants. My findings revealed that education was highly valued by my portrait participant throughout his education trajectory. However, culturally respectful probing allowed for this central theme to be extrapolated during the interview which otherwise may have

been overlooked through other theoretical and methodological approaches toward research. When considering the data collectively, I found that new educational paradigms for male Chicano and Latino students is needed, one that recognizes, affirms, and supports their aspirations for higher education.

Limitations. Data provided for the portrait was from the life experiences of one participant. Consequently, in spite of the qualitative rigor of portraiture methodology, the portrait is not generalizable. In a later section of this concluding chapter, I will discuss future directions for my research where I articulate ideas on how to expand this portrait to include data from my other participants to show how the themes identified in the portrait are aligned with data from my other participants.

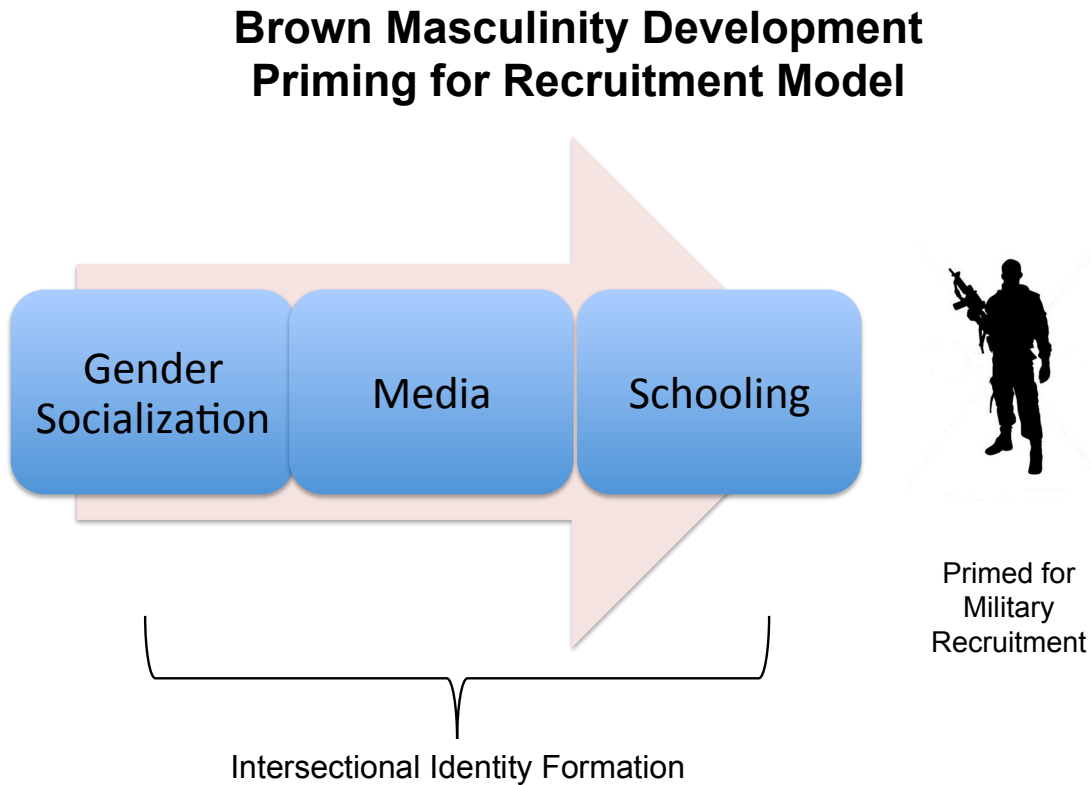
Contributions

Conceptual Contribution

I now return to Wright Mills's (1959) concept of the social imagination to connect biography with social concept as I introduce my conceptual contribution to the field of sociology of education. It is here where I pondered over my findings collectively and as if I were solving a puzzle, tapped into my social imaginary gaze using a *Jotería* lens one last time while asking myself a simple yet evocative question: so what?³⁸ My answer to that led me toward generating my contribution to the field in a concept I call Brown Masculinity Development Priming for Military Recruitment Model. This concept is depicted in the visual referred to as Figure 7.1 and provided as follows:

³⁸ The rigor of my methodological training embedded in this dissertation is a testament to the teaching of qualitative research design by committee member, Dr. Kris Gutierrez. By using the colloquial question "so what?" in my conclusion, I am also paying tribute to the way in which Kris mentored me and always pushes her students to consider framing conclusions around the question, "so what?" This frame allows me to consider how my work matters, specifically, how it advances social justice and equity in education.

Figure 7.1: Brown Masculinity Development Priming for Military Recruitment Model



To properly discuss the model above, I rely on the work of Malagón (2010a; 2010b) who finds the bodies of Chicano youth become physical and discursive sites marked within a raced, classed, gendered, and sexed meaning-making processes; such discourses being inscripted on their Chicano male bodies. I also draw from Cruz’s work (2001) where she states, “Situating knowledge in the brown body begins the validation of the narratives of survival, transformation, and emancipation of our respective communities, reclaiming histories and identities” (p. 668). Working in concert with one other, their work allowed me to conceptualize Chicano and Latino youth as Brown Masculinity in which their physical bodies become signifiers for how they are socialized through other social actors operating across gender socialization mediums, media, and

schooling practices. Such socialization imprints an intersection of identities as articulated in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. The socialization process acts as a form of priming, essentially grooming Brown youth who share experiences like the participants in my study, in order to be recruited with relative ease into the military. Once primed, military recruitment practices, some of which are deceptive, are tailored specifically to the intersectional identities of these Brown youth. The model I depicted and discussed greatly contributes to the literature in helping researchers and practitioners understand how this type of military recruitment works and it is my intent that this knowledge helps disrupt the priming of Brown masculinity for military recruitment.

Theoretical Contribution

The informative power of *Jotería* as a theoretical framework was realized throughout this dissertation. The lens privileged my own identity as a gay Xicano researcher while grounding the perspective in scholarly traditions from critical race theory, queer theory, and borderlands theory. Peppered throughout my findings were references to how my theoretical framework centralized the intersection of race, gender and sexuality as an analytical tool to frame and discuss both quantitative and qualitative data. If it not for my use of this intersectional lens, the bulk of the findings in chapter 5 where I couch my participants as Spiritual Warriors would have most likely been overlooked. I expect *Jotería* to continue to illuminate, resist, and inform the educational experiences of Chicana/os and Latina/os through research projects framed using this framework.

Methodological Contribution

I want to briefly retouch on a point I made during my discussion of methodology in chapter 3. Early on in that chapter, I mentioned that portraiture allowed me to marry the writing cadence of a poet with the scientific rigor of a traditional academic and in the process, such a marriage allowed me to confidently infuse my preferred writing voice into this work. In a nutshell, this point speaks to the power of portraiture for me. However, during the large learning curve I encountered when reading about portraiture, I made a decision to draw from portraiture as opposed to replicating portraiture. In other words, I made portraiture work for me, my writing style, and the manner in which I sketched my portrait in chapter 6. Subsequently, as a contribution I leave this brief research note documenting my blend of portraiture, *Jotería*, and theoretical sampling as a type of qualitative methodology. I tentatively call it *Jotería* portraiture, knowing that my methodological contribution is a topic I will explore further through future work.

Con Safos

Burciaga (1993) explains the meaning of *con safos* as a Chicano symbol denoted by the letters, c/s, translating literally as “with safety.” When providing historical and cultural context for the way in which c/s was used, the letters protected the work of Chicana/os in the form of *placas* placed at the end of a piece. Burciaga also described *can safos* as a literary imprimatur as a way to respectfully end discussion. During the height of the *Chicano Movimiento*, artists and writers used the c/s symbol to sign their works. In homage to the Chicana/o traditions of the past and to recognize that my work stands on the shoulders of Chicana/o giants who forged my path toward *el doctorado*, I respectfully end this dissertation.

C/S

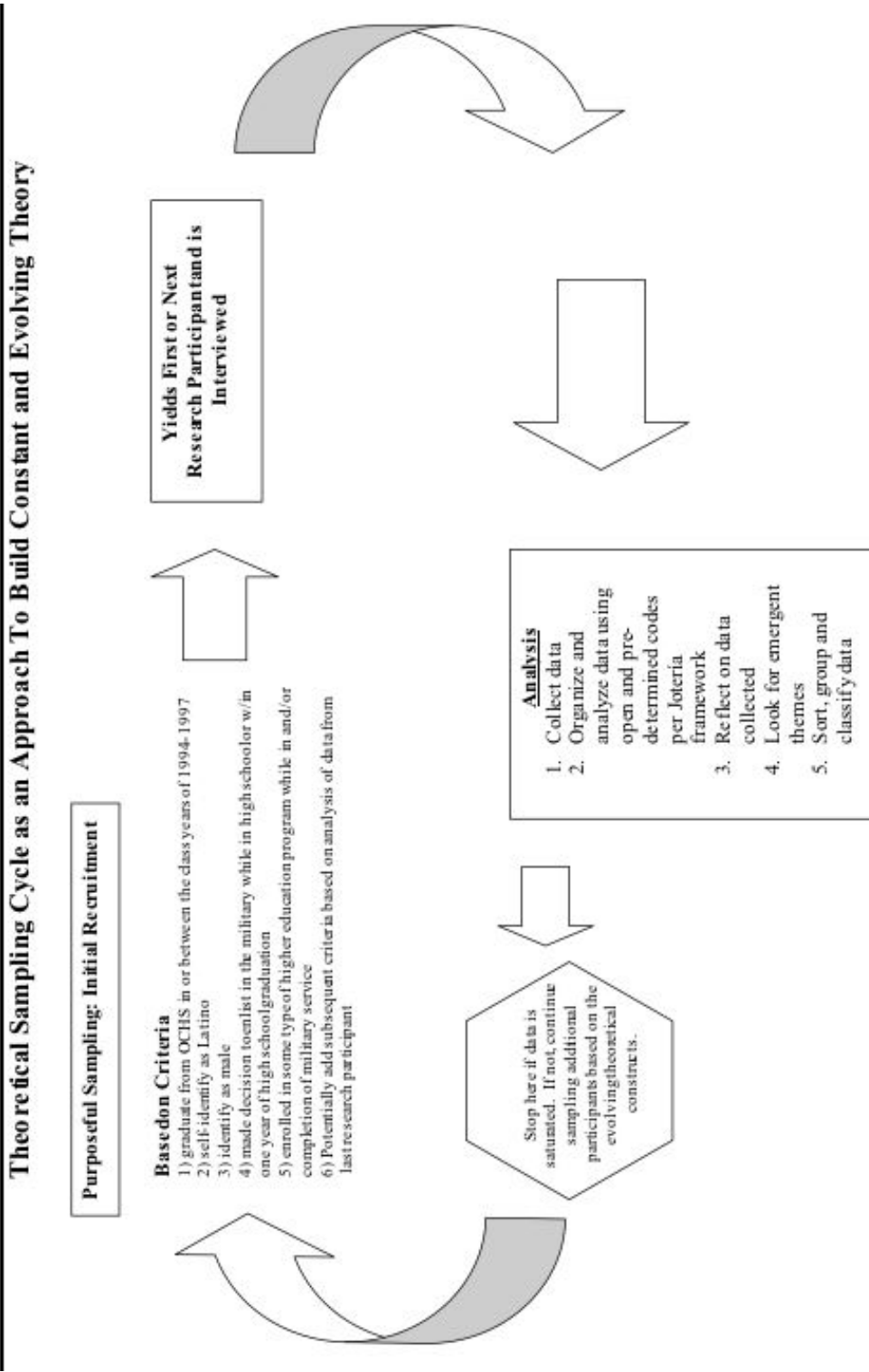
Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Research Participants

Note that a variation of these questions have been used before during pilot study and proved successful at generating robust responses. Questions were used as a guide, rather than a formal script. The conversational tone of interviews during pilot studies will be maintained for the dissertation interviews because it proved useful in having research participants provide richer responses.

1. What is your educational background? (probe for BA degree completion)
2. If applicant attended college ask, when did you decide to attend college?
3. What inspired or motivated you to attend college?
4. Tell me about your family (probe for size of family).
5. How has your family influenced your decision to attend college?
6. What type of support has your family provided in your decision to attend college?
7. What type of aspirations did you have for yourself when you were in high school?
8. What type of aspirations did your parent(s)/guardian(s) have when you were in high school?
9. How much of an impact do you think those aspirations had on your likelihood to attend college?
10. Tell me about your military experience (probe for reason(s) subject decided to enlist, amount of time spent in the military, and challenges encountered in the military with a particular focus on issues of captured by Jotería [race, racism, gender, sexism, sexuality, hetrosexism]).
13. Did you take advantage of the GI bill and attend college after enlisting in the military? If so, how did the military facilitate the college going process for you?
14. Did the military either encourage or discourage you from attending college?

Appendix B



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