



***Working with Immigrant Students: Lessons  
Learned in Addressing the Educational  
Needs and Resources of Latino Immigrant  
Students in the U.S.***

Conference of the International Society For The  
Scholarship Of Teaching & Learning

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Center for Intercultural Teaching and Learning

Goshen College

**CITL** Center for Intercultural  
Teaching and Learning



# Presentation Overview

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- **Background & Context of Studies**
- **Social Capital and Academic Achievement: Latino College Students' Perceptions of the Importance of Family, Peer and Institutional Relationships**
- **Moral Capital, Parental Support and their Role in the Retention of Latino Immigrant Students at the Post Secondary Level**
- **Questions and Discussion**



# BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

GOSHEN COLLEGE AND CITL

**CITL** Center for Intercultural  
Teaching and Learning



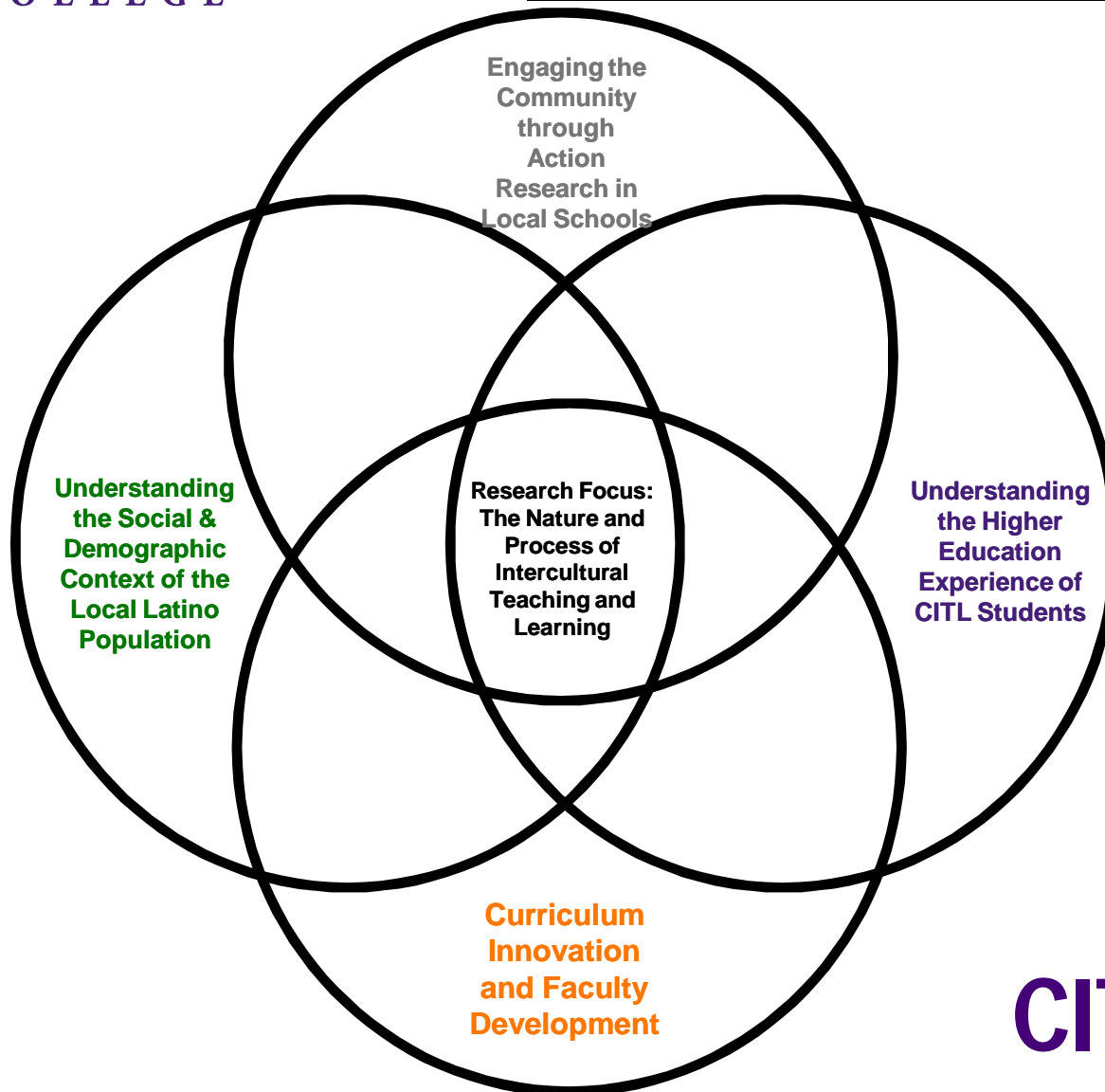
# Goshen College

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- Faith-based Liberal Arts College rooted in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition
- Total Population: Approx. 1000 Students, primarily undergraduate students.
- 10% students of color, 8% international students
- Student-to-faculty ration is 13:1



***CITL promotes and assesses collaborative internal and external initiatives that aim to transform both our own campus and the educational environment in our region.***



***Recruitment and Retention***

***Curriculum and Campus Transformation***

***Research***

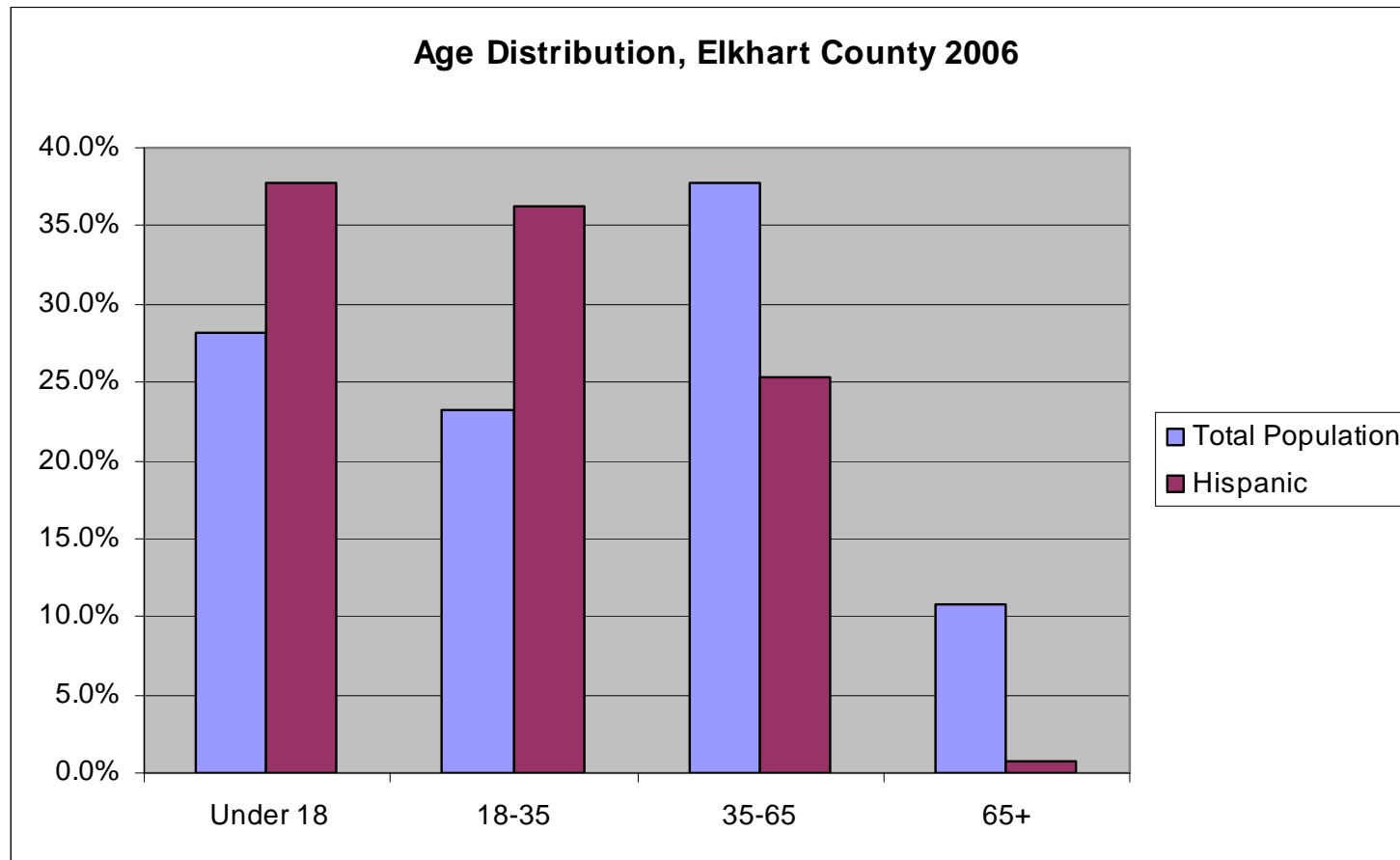
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# **Demographic, Economic and Educational Context: Latinos in Elkhart County, IN**

# Age Distribution, Elkhart County 2006

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## Economic Context : Latinos in Elkhart County

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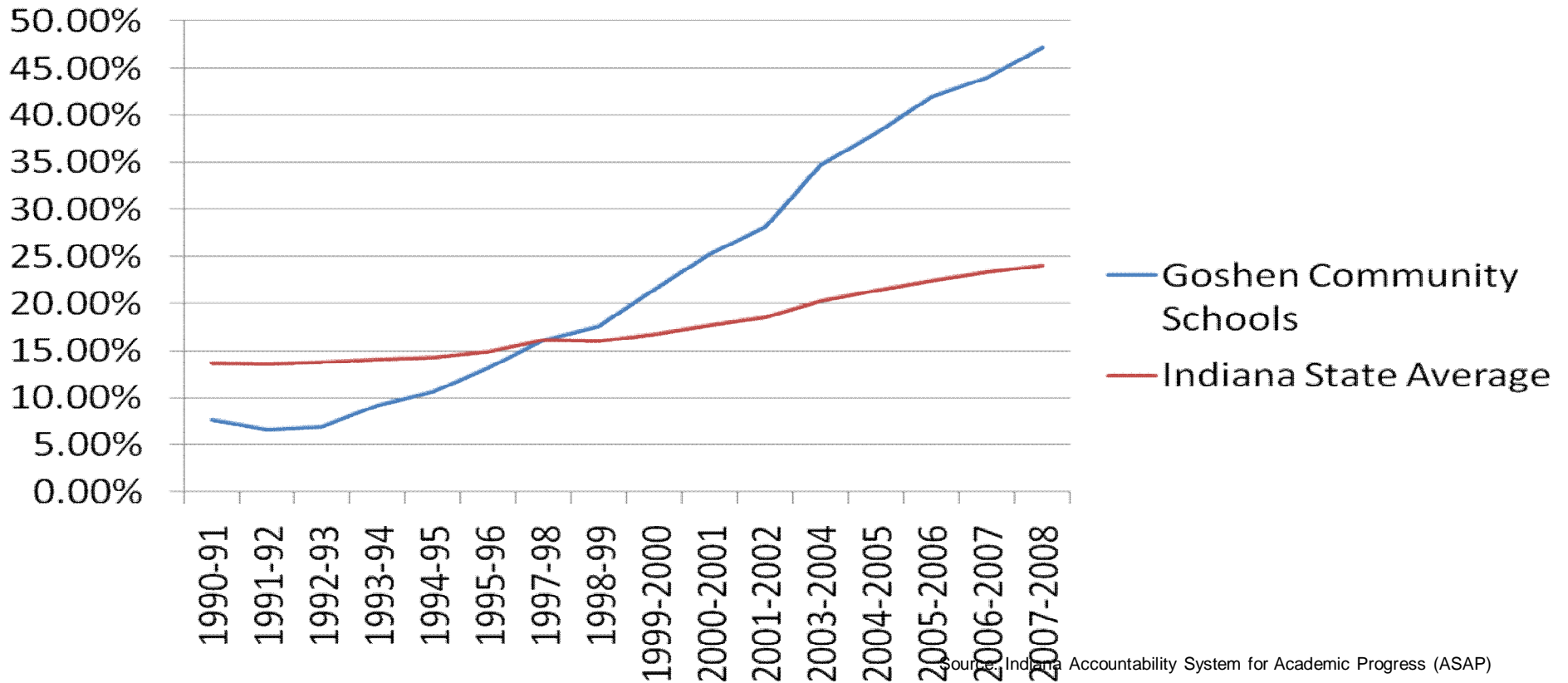
- Earn \$38,000 which is \$10,000 less than the majority population
- Migrate to Midwest for the purpose of attaining jobs available in the unskilled labor market, specifically food processing and light industry.
- RV manufacturing was particularly popular, but the recession has cut employment by 15%
- 27% of Latinos have less than a high school education (total population 3.5%)

*(Source: 2006 American Community Survey and Indiana Department of Workforce Development)*



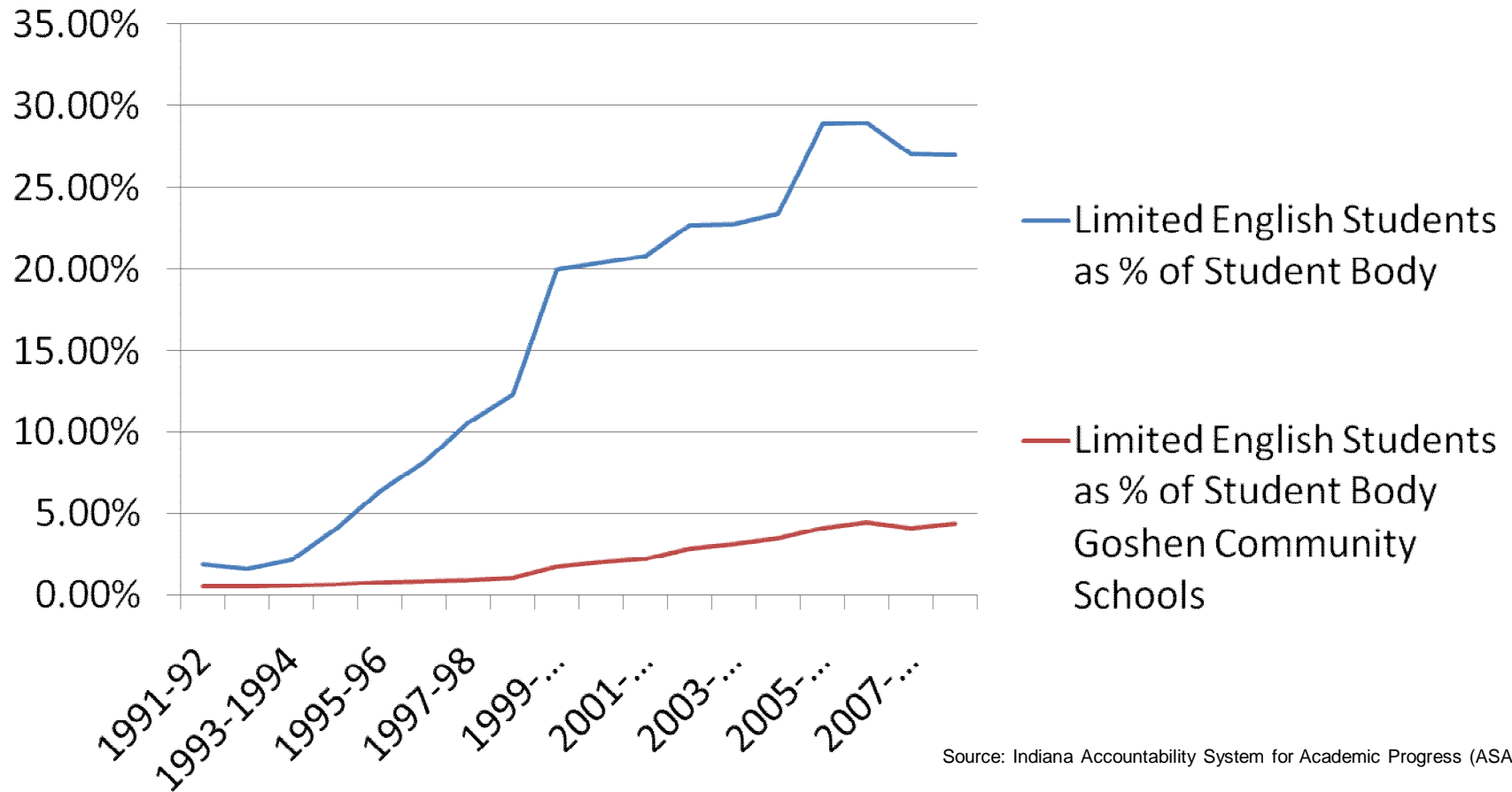
# School Snapshot: *Minority Student Population 1990-2008*

## Minority Students as % of Total Student Body





## School Snapshot: *Limited English Student Population 1991-2008*



Source: Indiana Accountability System for Academic Progress (ASAP)



***Social Capital and Academic Achievement:  
Latino College Students' Perceptions of the  
Importance of Family, Peer and Institutional  
Relationships***

Aliah Carolan-Silva, Ph.D., Robert Reyes, Ph.D.  
and Getnet Bitew, Ph.D

Center for Intercultural Teaching and Learning  
Goshen College

# Research Questions

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- (1) What resources do Latino students identify as important for their educational success in college?
- (2) What social relationships facilitate access to these resources according to students?
- (3) What factors affect students' ability to develop and maintain these relationships?



# Social Capital Theory

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- Means to understand how resources are acquired through social relationships and networks and how these relationships can be fostered or developed to support academic achievement
- Three components of Social Capital: Possessors of social capital, sources of social capital, resources themselves (Portes 1998)
- Students have differential access to resources, norms, values, attitudes and behaviors necessary for school success through their social relationships



# Nature of Social Relationships

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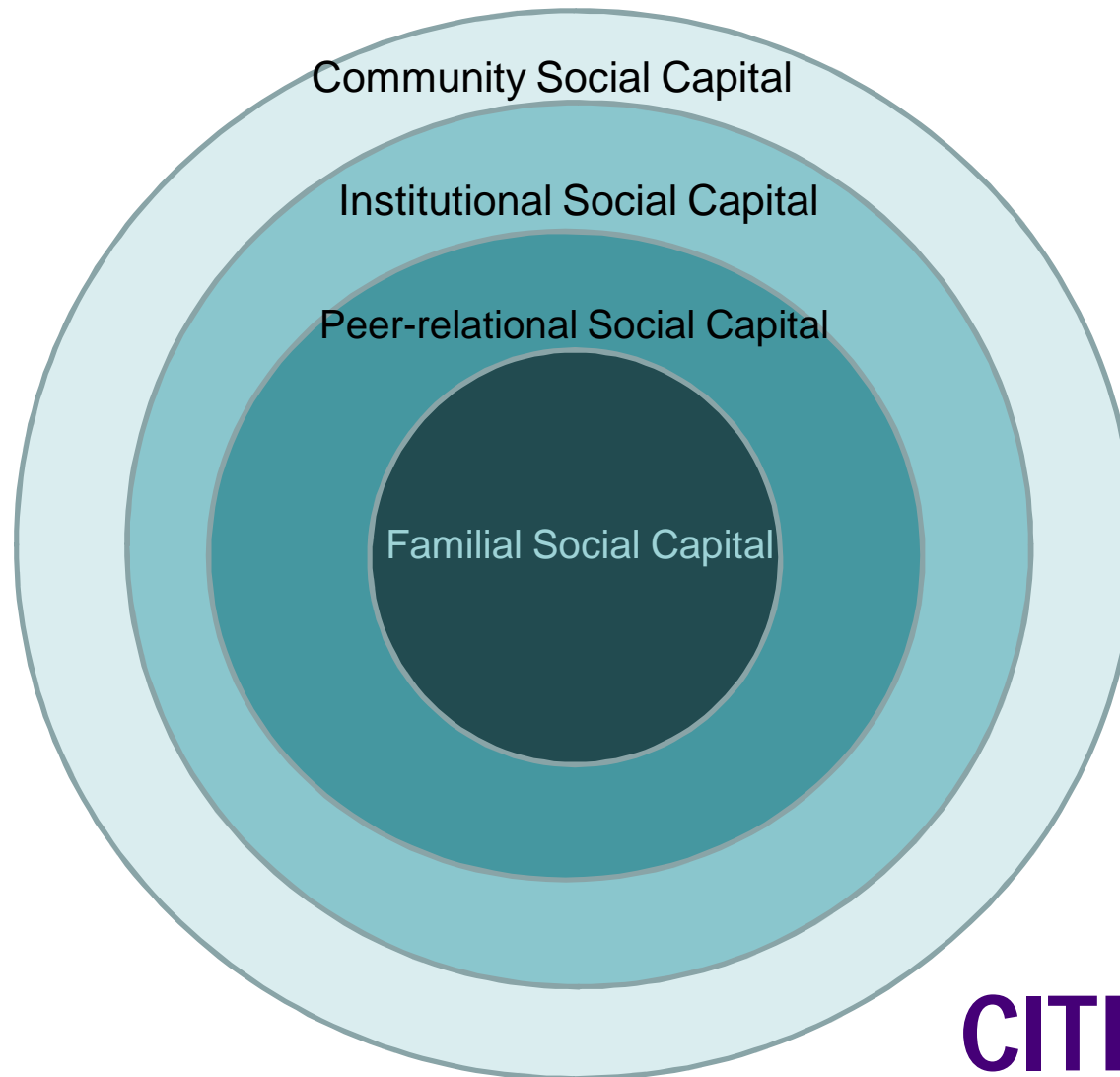
## **Strong /Weak Ties**

- Strong ties include relationships with family members or people with which an individual has frequent interactions in multiple settings
- Weak ties include relationships with people who one encounters less frequently and typically in a very limited number of settings. These ties can be with teachers, counselors, social workers or other institutional agents

## **Horizontal/Vertical Ties**

## Sources of Social Capital: Nested Levels of Analysis

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## Literature on role of relationships in supporting academic success of Low SES/Minority Students

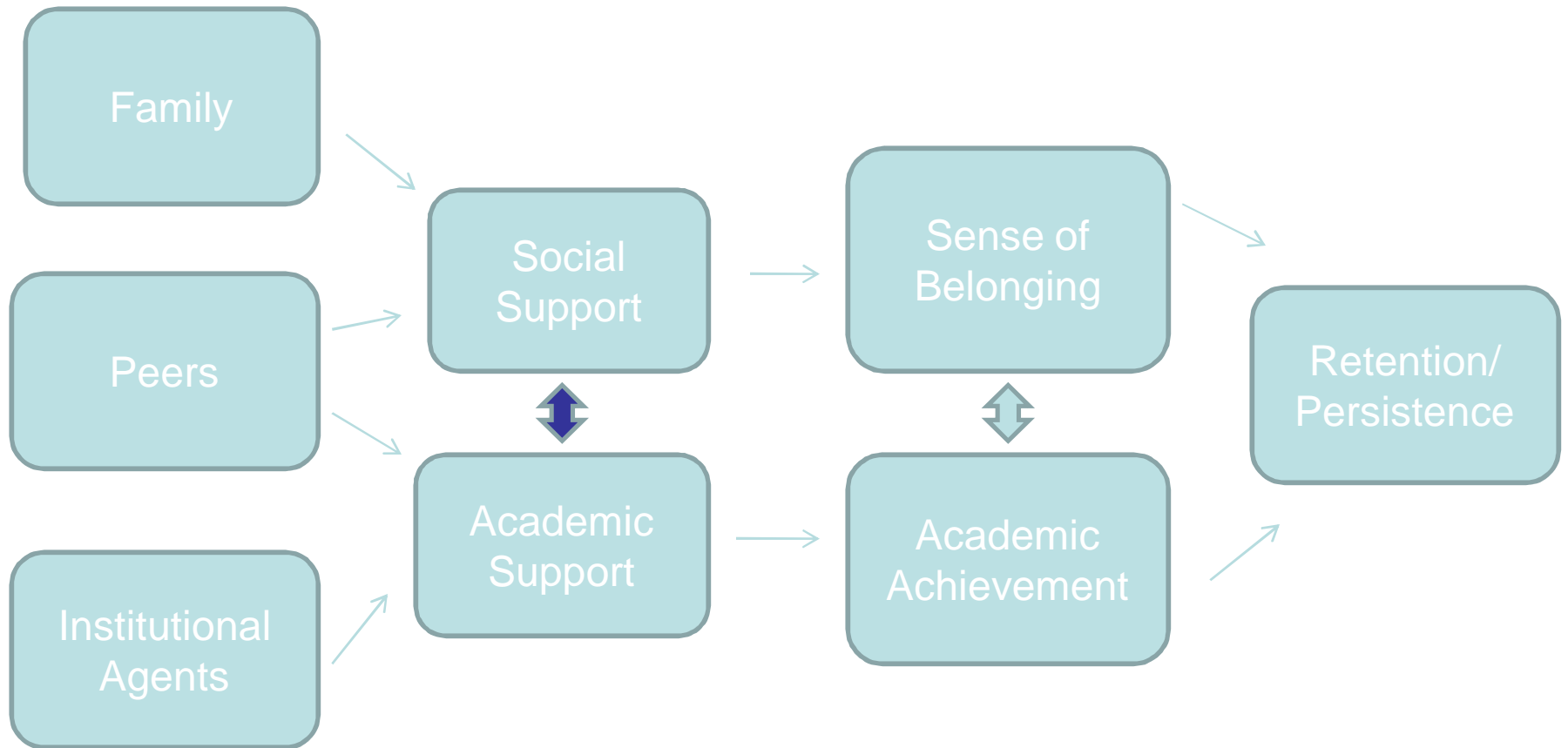
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Source of Social Capital	Nature of Relationships	Resources Acquired
Family	Strong, Horizontal	Moral support, advice/guidance, cultural identity
Peers	Strong, Horizontal or Vertical	Pro-academic and/or cultural identities, sense of belonging
Institutional Agents	Weak, Vertical	Academic Support, Information, knowledge of the system

# Sense of Belonging

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- Sense of membership in the college community
- Feelings of social cohesion and connectedness across the college
- “emotional and moral” support from college community
- Support for cultural and linguistic practices
  - From Nuñez 2009





# Methodology

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- Interviews with two sets of first year Latino college students participating in the CITL program about their experiences transitioning to college
  - Year One: Ten students
  - Year Two: Thirteen students



# Family Relationships

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## **Encouragement/Motivation:**

“Part of it is through my family. I am really close to my parents and any time I had a problem...they are like “you know what, hold your head up...keep going...you’re fine...we raised you to be strong and you’re ok”...and so I had to keep that in the front of my mind.... “

“Yeah, in regards of my capability of doing good in college that was the thing that the first week of orientation week that week was so overwhelming that the last day of like when you would register...yes I am going to this college...I was just like so questioning myself...”Am I going to do well?”...I was so like...My self-esteem was so low...I was like “I am not going to do well in this college so why bother to register?” But my mom would tell me if you don’t try you will never know...so that was the thing that encouraged me most of doing it if I don’t try it I’m not going to know if I will do good in college...”

# Family Relationships

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## Checking up on them

“My mom is (involved) a lot, like she keeps on asking me questions like how I am doing in class, how I am doing with my grades and everything. I mean like academically she’s always there to check up on me and everything and so is my dad after my mom starts talking. My dad will be like how are you doing and all this... “

“They are like not that involved, but when I am at home they will ask me like “do you have homework?” “do you have an assignment to do?” ... I will say “yeah”, they will ask me when are they due... I will tell them, and they will tell me...well you have this much time start doing it. or when I am like that late like at 12:00 or 1:00 in the morning...they are like “stop, relax, you will not be good for tomorrow to class so just rest.”... so they will support me in academics even though they did not go to high school...they will still support me and they encourage me to do it...like “do your best”...like that kind of encouragement”



# Family Relationships

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## **Cultural Maintenance/Identity**

“Well, I would say that my parents are very involved in, you know, keeping the Mexican culture alive... they support a lot staying traditional maybe, not like be Americanized as some people want to say, but more of you know remembering where we come from, and how we got here, and that kind of stuff. So, when it comes to academics, I mean, maybe they do not physically or are there for support. But, you know it is a kind of a mindset that you know what you are doing and you know what... even though they do not say it, it is kind of expected.”

# Peer Relationships

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## Encouragement/Motivation

“With my peer mentor, he is my friend. He asked me what classes I was taking and to keep up the hard work, put more effort into it and “hechale ganas” and stuff like that. We hung out a lot and did stuff together, even sometimes on weekends. He sets a good example because ...he’s almost going to graduate. I mean he is also very active so it’s a good example that your peer mentor is looking out for you and cares about you.”



# Peer Relationships

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## Acceptance

“I can help them (future Latino students) showing them that if they are not used to being open to people, this would be a great place to start, cause here, like no one is like, “oh, I don’t want to talk to that person ‘cause he is Mexican or because he is Black or Asian or whatever.” Here it’s like really open ...open community at Goshen so I can like ...I feel that I can relate to them. Cause at first I was kind of closed...so that would be the biggest part I could help people in being open and not being afraid of talking to other people.”



# Peer Relationships

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## **Valuing diversity and difference**

“...it’s a great way to connect to the college because you can see that you are not the only different person here that there are a lot of persons like you and you can connect to those kind of students and by connecting to the students you can connect to the staff and then connect to the college, which is like a process... Just being involved and knowing the people around you... the person beside you, it’s a good way to connect. Just like making friends...you can start with your Hispanic friends, and from that you can start like a web going for other races...other kind of people.”

# Institutional Relationships (Faculty)

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## Frequency and Consistency of Meetings

““Like my colloquium teacher...She was very supportive in my colloquium class like meeting every two weeks or three or so. It was very supportive like asking questions how are your classes are going? Which was really good.”

“With my English teacher she would set a meeting about every month or so to see how classes are going and to see how that class is going with me...She would ask me questions...like, “How is it going?” And “How are your classes?”... That’s a great thing that she did...”



# Institutional Relationships (Faculty)

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## **Concern for students overall well-being**

“And it seems like they really care about the people in the program so I think that’s a big part too. Cause people can tell, especially students ...the faculty really cares about how they are doing and making sure they are staying on task.”

“ Because I fell like, you know, your professors get to know you personally. And they, they really care about your individual learning, and like. They’re there to help you with your learning, so. I think. Yeah, my level of enjoyment is, I like it a lot. A lot better (than at a large university).”

(Regarding role of faculty mentors) “instead of just having like a meeting ... and how is your day today, how are your grades and that being it ...you know maybe try to get involved more with their personal life and figure out you know are they having a good day...is their home life ok? I mean if they feel open enough to talk to us about that I think getting more personal with them”



# Institutional Relationships (Faculty)

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## Validating and Valuing students' identities

“Faculty and staff, there were maybe two or three people...professors here that I knew I could go to and send e-mails to and talk to them about anything whether I was having trouble academically or anything... and my English professor, she was really nice and really got me involved in lots of things. And she seemed to trust me really well because she would get me to do extra things outside of the class for her...whether it was leading a discussion we were having on that day, which I felt really nice because she trusted me...”

“With the faculty I was able to meet at least twice a month... It was nice because I was able to communicate with him very well. Like he can also speak Spanish and I met his family when we were meeting at his house.”



# Institutional Relationships (CITL)

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## **Importance of the source of capital initiating the relationship**

“So I mean just placing people sooner in academic help, talking to them...meeting with them more frequently to address how they are doing academically to achieve their goals like if they are going out and communicating with other people. I mean just things like those two things, especially communication and academic are the two most important ways and by just having the academic advisor you guys are having next year I mean that could be a really big help for people for Latinos that are not really wanting to ask for help. To have someone almost like private for them that they can go to. “



# Institutional Relationships (CITL)

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## **“Checking Up” on students**

“Well, I would say that because I am in the CITL program, I feel like you know they are keeping me on track. ..You know, I feel like if I was not in the program, maybe I would not be slack enough simply because I know that there is not someone there checking on me to know that I am staying on track. So, I think that definitely, it helps to have someone you know making sure of how you are doing this. “

“Like some students like myself I didn’t ask for help so it was too late already. So I mean just keeping up with the students and checking just how they are progressing in their classes and just sitting down be like hey we are trying to get you help cause we don’t want you to do bad in your academic goals.“



GOSHEN  
COLLEGE

# Institutional Relationships (CITL)

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## Encouragement/Motivation

“Have more tutors and have people to help and pressure, well not pressure, but keep on top of them about their grades and help them realize and look more on their grades and the advantages of coming to college. Show them to appreciate the stuff they got and take nothing for granted.”

“They really push us to like do good, and like I think that their program helps a lot. Because I know their program has helped me lot. Since they gave me money, I want to be like “OK, I gotta do good because I can’t lose my scholarship.” And like um, I think the college does a good job with focusing on like... us. Like us, Latinos. ...I think that’s great. That they’re helping us. That they have all these people trying to talk to us so we can get through college. So like, by the time we graduate, instead of being like 10 of us, it’s not like, 2. You know? So. I think they do a good job.”



# Institutional Relationships (CITL)

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## **Valuing cultural and linguistic practices**

“I think CITL can be a great way for students to plug in to academic support in the context of an environment that removes cultural barriers.”

“You know, as far as the CITL thing is like to have that group. Like you have that group that you can kinda depend on. And... I find, you know, I find it very, it's very nice that it's so diverse, because... you know, you're not discriminated against or anything. Because of, you know. Because of your race or anything.”



# Importance of combination of resources and sources of support

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“Well just growing up and knowing the potential that I have...like, because I wasn't sure that I would be successful in college so having that support of the teachers, the staff, and the peers... it made me believe in myself...and my self esteem got higher...so just being more comfortable with what I do with what I am capable of doing...it just made me grow personal, emotional, even academically... it rose my everything. So it was really positive the experience.”

“Cause like academics is one thing, but like the other type of lessons, like life lessons are more important. So like when you meet people from like different backgrounds? And even like different states and different cultures, you kinda, kinda form a sense... of like where you belong, I guess. And kinda like, it just kinda makes you get an idea of how things are around you. And like I guess how privileged or unprivileged you are, and like...And I think that's kind of part of college. What college is about. Kind of giving you a sense of who you are, where you belong, what you're meant to do. Like profession-wise but also like in like, you know, what things you like and don't like. So if, we would have like a bigger mix of people? That would help it a lot.”

# Caring Theory

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- Aesthetic caring: attention to things, content and ideas, “caring about school”
- Moral ethic of caring: Values reciprocal relationships, “caring for students”
- “Teachers ask students to *care about* school while students ask to be *cared for* before they *care about*.”
  - Valenzuela 1999



# Strong Ties with Institutional Agents

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- Importance of developing personal relationships with faculty/staff
- Blur the distinction between caring only about academic aspects of life and caring for them as people
- Focus on importance of relationships with faculty that take a personal interest in them, also support them academically

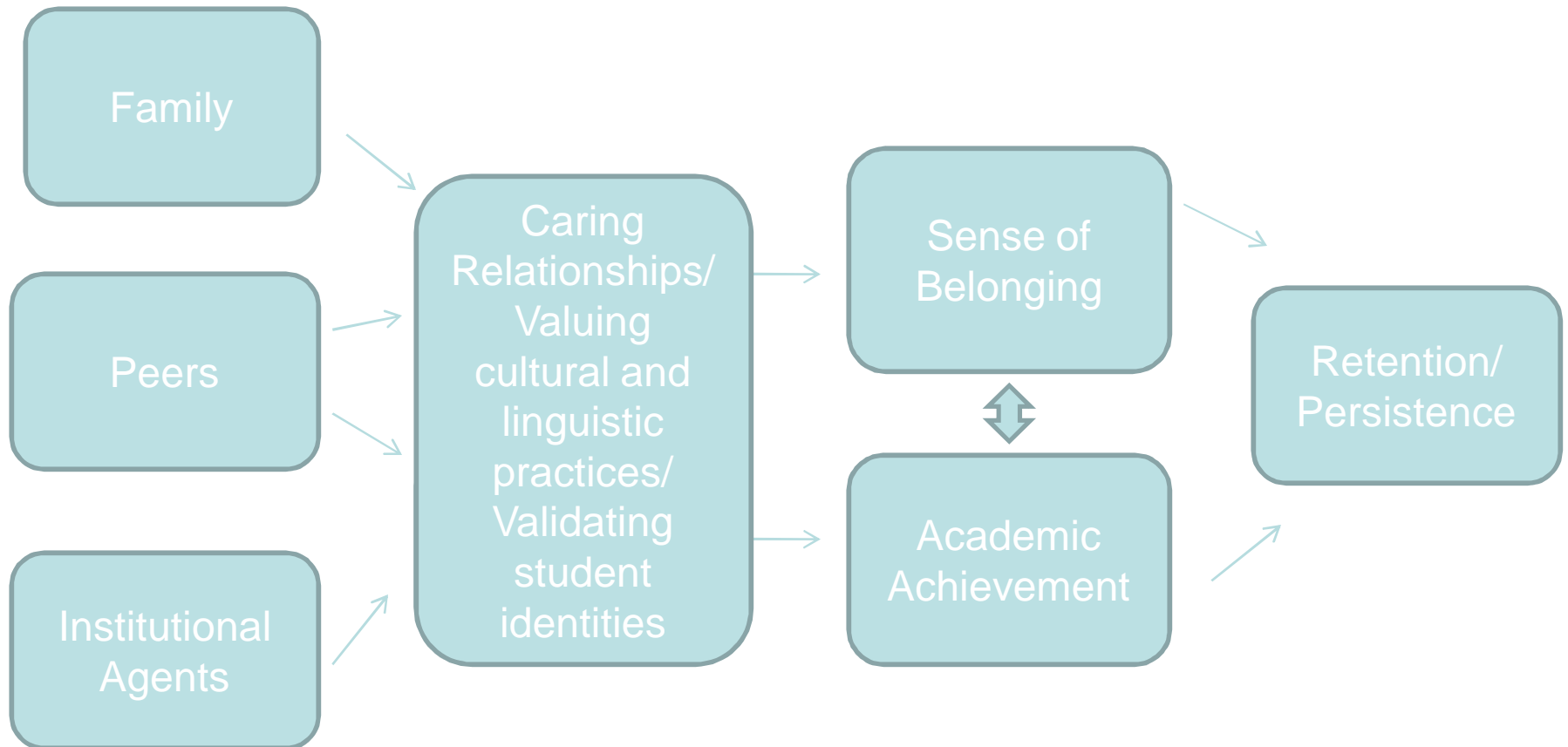
# Qualities of Relationships

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- Students emphasize characteristics of desirable relationships with “institutional agents” that are similar to their close relationships with family and friends
  - ❖ Frequent interactions
  - ❖ Personal aspects of relationship
  - ❖ “checking up” on them
  - ❖ Providing moral and emotional support
  - ❖ Respect for/Interest in cultural and linguistic practices
  - ❖ Provision of academic support important, but only one aspect of relationship

# Conclusion

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## Discussion Questions/ Directions for Future Research

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- How do we institutionalize these types of supports and relationships for students?
- How does caring theory relate to student learning at the post-secondary level?
- How might this apply to other groups of students?