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Editors’ Note

It is with great pleasure and anticipation that we present you with the first issue of the *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*. Over the past 15 years, scholarly work on multiculturalism has flourished. Yet, across this powerful sea of work we contemplate an important empty space; that is, the apparent paucity of significant scholarly and practical research on Hispanic higher education worldwide. This is not to say there hasn’t been significant work done by several noted scholars, as well as several prominent research institutes throughout the world. It certainly isn’t the quality of the articles that have been written related to Hispanic colleges and universities, but the quantity of information that is lacking. It proves highly challenging to complete a comprehensive literature review in this broad field. *JHHE* hopes to fill that void by affirming the need to study Hispanic higher education both nationally and internationally as we consider interrelated and interlocking systems in our global village.

While working in their research, Drs. Michael W. Mulnix and Randall G. Bowden, the founding editors, reviewed hundreds of documents—from pop culture to demographic trends—and found very little information dedicated solely to the growth, needs, expressions, and issues surrounding Hispanic-serving colleges and universities. Due to this absence of formally published material, Mulnix wrote a marketing plan for the new journal and submitted it to Sage Publications. It was accepted. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Esther Elena López, a scholar at St. Lawrence University who has been writing on the topic of multiculturalism for nearly a decade, was invited to join the team as co-editor.

The goal of this publication is simple: to provide both practitioners and scholars 96 blank pages—four times a year—to publish their very best work in such diverse areas as administration, education, technology, curriculum, federal funding, science, communication, finance, the arts, and much more. The new *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* is devoted to the advancement of knowledge and understanding of the broadest possible range of issues at Hispanic-serving institutions worldwide.

Over the past year of developing *JHHE*, what we found was a tremendous amount of enthusiasm; an incredible, eager community; and a wide array of support among scholars and practitioners for an idea whose time has come of age. With the additional backing of Sage, *JHHE* commenced with a forum for the highest quality scholarly, creative, and practical articles. To extend this excitement, we are soliciting from a broad range of writers and researchers both quantitative and qualitative articles and are particu-
larly interested in research that crosses both cultural and disciplinary boundaries.

As the journal took form, there were many discussions about whether its contents would include articles in both English and Spanish, particularly because of its international scope. The decision was ultimately made to print the articles in English; however, in future issues readers can expect at least one article printed in Spanish, with separate translations available in English. While the expectation is for steady growth, the editors at Sage will thus eventually decide if there is enough demand for complete issues in both languages. For now, we are printing the abstracts in both Spanish and English.

Another important decision concerned the use of the term “Hispanic” in the title. We recognize that language is constantly changing; it evolves over time. The term “minority,” for example, can be interpreted as representing a “lesser group” and thus perpetuating a negative portrayal of that group (marginalization and, perhaps, even oppression). With this in mind, language became especially challenging when we chose the title of this journal. We are aware that a number of groups and individuals would prefer “Latino” over “Hispanic.” We even debated using “Hispanic/Latino” but found this cumbersome. One aspect influencing the use of the single term “Hispanic” is that it is widely used in local, state, and federal government agencies, as well as public and private institutions, which makes it recognizable. Another, more significant issue is that it seems to be a more inclusive term, although some would debate this point as well. Nevertheless, we fully recognize that “labels” tend to homogenize distinct historical experiences and tend to blur cross-cultural identities. We are aware of this challenge and only want readers to know that we chose the term “Hispanic” in our attempt to be inclusive, and consistent. Each manuscript’s author will be free, of course, to use the term(s) that she or he prefers.

We sincerely hope you enjoy *JHHE* and welcome your comments. We believe we will have succeeded in this venture if we can provide you with timely and interesting articles and to spark debate on issues of importance at Hispanic-serving institutions worldwide. We are entirely dependent on you for writing those articles, and look forward to hearing from you. Recuerda, esperamos tu respuesta porque dependemos totalmente de los manuscritos que nos mandes.

A note about the cover: The designers at Sage came up with the idea for a textile graphic after looking through several Hispanic Web sites. They wanted an image that was not limited to one particular ethnic group, but something that conveyed an all-inclusive image. The idea is that the textile will be rotated from year to year, thereby encouraging that all nationalities are eventually represented. We hope readers will find the texture of the “textile covers” to be warm and nurturing. A cover that changes over time also embraces
our vision of the journal that is, in and of itself, constantly evolving, with articles that represent scholarly, practical, and artistic contributions.

—Esther Elena López
—Michael William Mulnix

Editors
“Changing the Blood”:
Language, Literature, and Teaching

RAY M. KECK III

Abstract: The past 30 years have seen develop, flower, and then disappear a rich assortment of theories and strategies dedicated to language teaching. The author offers a panoramic view of these pedagogical approaches and argues in favor of a method to join literature and language from the first weeks of study. Art changes the blood, and the art of a people is most thoroughly transmitted in its language. He analyzes a series of texts that demonstrate how Spanish literature holds out to us a new and different world, giving us new and uncommon options to understand ourselves and our circumstances.

Resumen: Los últimos treinta años han visto nacer, florear, y volverse polvo un rico surtido de teorías y estrategias dirigidas a la enseñanza de idiomas. El autor examina un panorama histórico pedagógico, y luego aboga por un nexo estrecho entre el arte y las lecciones de lengua aún en los primeros días de estudio; porque el arte cambia la sangre, y el arte de un pueblo se transmite de la manera más definitiva en su lengua. Comenta una serie de textos que demuestran como la literatura española nos depara un mundo nuevo y diferente, dándonos opciones nuevas, e inusitadas, para entendernos a nosotros mismos y a nuestra circunstancia.

When we think back to the century we just left behind, irreconcilable dualities and contradictions thrust themselves upon our minds: violent change and entrenched hierarchies, unspeakable cruelty and widespread compassion, liberation and enslavement, advances in science and a loss of religious fervor, delivery from hunger and terrifying famines, an end to smallpox and a beginning of AIDS, mass communication for increasingly banal thoughts and events. The history of pedagogy in the 20th century is, like political and social history, conflicted and confused. In her recent book, Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms, Diane Ravitch (2000) mapped the black forest of tangled theories and clashing constructs that have encircled those of us who live in education and in teaching. The reflections that follow will explore one tract of that ideological forest, proposing an optimum relationship

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between language, literature, and teaching. I will describe what I believe the most fruitful and productive method of teaching a language: how literature should, from the first moments, form an integral part of language teaching; how the study of language and literature fosters new sensibilities; and how Hispanic literature, judiciously introduced into classes in the Spanish language, communicates to even beginning students the uniquely Hispanic experience. And finally, these observations will, I hope, serve to demonstrate that any divide between language, literature, and culture, alarmingly and widely asserted, is a meretricious one.

Two examples of how we language teachers have approached our task will serve to mark the bounds of traditional and contemporary practice, extremes that I believe we should avoid. The first approach we might call the classical strategy. We inherited this method from studies of Greek and Latin, courses in which students mastered grammatical structures to read a classical text. In importing this methodology into the modern language classroom, we expected a student to grasp for himself or herself possible connections between the grammar textbook and language embedded in a living culture. I recall vividly how, as a beginning teacher in the fall of 1970, a fine preparatory school in New England offered me a job teaching Spanish and proudly initiated me into its tradition of foreign language teaching. Although we were encouraged to conduct the classes in Spanish, the work of each course was the same: Students translated, translated, translated—from English to Spanish—sentences designed to test mastery of grammar. It never occurred to anyone that any of these sentences would ever be uttered, even in imagined conversations. The grammar of foreign language classes was calculated to measure a student’s grammatical prowess, his or her ability to manipulate formally correct patterns. Anyone who has ever encountered these minatory mindbenders will shudder to recall them:

If I were to have seen you, I would have told you to bring me the book by 10:00 p.m. unless you were sick.

Or another:

I will help you provided that you let me know in advance of your needs and assure me that I can count on cooperation from everybody else.

(Why didn’t we hear the ring of “la razón de la sinrazón”?) After requiring students to battle such leaden farrago, we introduced them to literature and literary analysis. Again, any direct connection between the literary work and “life” was strictly left to each student’s fantasy.

Thirty years and innumerable embroilments later, all is changed. Consider the following admonitions, by Benjamin Robinson (2001), which appeared recently in a journal published by the Association of Departments of
Foreign Languages. An assistant professor of Germanic languages and literatures at Ohio State University, Robinson urged that we become “practical service departments,” that we “sell to administrators and potential students . . . [our] unmatched ability to teach the foreign languages that are necessary for international business, for cross-community or international public service, and for research and developmental exchange” (p. 20). Robinson called his model “a freshman integrated language and culture seminar” offering “an administratively practical way of sparking intellectual fires in foreign cultural studies and solidifying the administrative standing of language departments” (p. 20). We must show, Robinson told us, an immediate connection between language, business, foreign service, and research and development. A “culture” course, not the traditional one stressing language and literature, will fit the bill, save us from obscurity or extinction, and enhance our standing in the school or university.

A practical service department will undoubtedly enhance our standing in some circles. Our society most readily rewards effort directed toward individualistic and materialist ends. Administrators within the academy and employers without will enthusiastically welcome the promise of language study closely linked to the modern market. In his brilliantly written and vatic book *Jewish Renewal*, Michael Lerner (1994) described this phenomenon as “empiricist epistemology” and “materialist ontology,” organization and origin circumscribed by the particular and sensual aspirations of the individual. Spirituality and ethics are reduced “to a merely subjective expression of emotion or personal choice.” Lerner argued, I think correctly, that for modern societies in the West, the ultimate test of reality has become “that which can be presented to our senses” (pp. 26-31). It follows, therefore, that language acquisition can be of great use in making the sale, closing the deal, and achieving a productive place in the market society. Foreign language courses must provide access to the culture of commerce and economic development.

Separated by 30 years, yet widely representative of tendencies in our field, the two courses I have described—grammar puzzles in one, foreign language as commodity in the other—fail to address why I continue to study and to teach Spanish and what has generated for me the countless exciting moments I have spent in solitary reflection or in animated exchanges with students. Many years ago, a student commented, “When I enter your classroom, I feel as though I step into another world.” For that student, my teaching had achieved what I had most hoped to do.

Each language offers its speakers a unique way to see, to feel, to think, and to be in the world. In the language and because of it, life thrives and throbs and pulsates, created and arrayed in the words that confer upon each culture its unique shape: not better, not worse, just unique. But there is no need to divorce perplexing perceptions of otherness from larger human
questions of value and meaning. It is futile, and indeed a misrepresentation of human experience, to think that we can speak or teach the language of business and research and development, somehow segregating it from literary or artistic contamination. All students enter our language classes pondering the same eternal questions: Who am I? What will I become? With whom will I spend my life? What is love? How can I express it? Will I suffer much? If so, why? Why does anyone suffer? What is death? When will it come? My task, as I teach students the Spanish language, is to lead each student to perceive how these questions are posed and answered in another culture, another tongue, another world.

We will teach best and our students will attach themselves most readily to what we are teaching if we allow the moral and ethical dimensions of life, captured in literature and in art, into the language classroom with us. In its writings, in its literature, and in its art, a culture enters into dialogue with itself, portraying, examining, questioning, judging. “Numbered, numbered, weighed, divided,” the mysterious hand wrote, defining forever the reaches of national reflection. A systematic, careful, and intelligent integration of art and literature into the language curriculum discloses to a student multiple realities, harmonies, and conflicts—lives lived at great verbal, physical, cultural, historical, and temporal remove. D. H. Lawrence (1971) has described the metamorphosis and illumination awakened by an encounter with art:

The essence of art is moral. Not aesthetic, not decorative, not pastime and recreation. But moral. The essential function of art is moral. But a passionate, implicit morality, not didactic. A morality which changes the blood, rather than the mind. Change the blood first. The mind follows later, in the wake. (p. 180)

To “change the blood” should be the goal of every language class. It is only when we confront moral questions, seen through the lens of another culture, that we begin to understand that culture, that we begin to acquire new blood.

Somehow, as language teachers, we must have used and then abused literature, conveying the impression that our purpose was to make of each student a professional critic. Today, Professor Robinson’s (2001) “practical” strategy offers a market-sensitive defense at a time when there is much criticism of impractical courses in literature and much talk of relevant courses in culture. And yet for me—and I would wager for most of those who teach the Spanish language—it is precious moments remembered in literature—special verses, powerful scenes—that moved our hearts, created new blood within us, and made us want to give our lives to studying and teaching the new world before us.

In 30 years of teaching and studying Spanish, a number of texts have fixed themselves in my mind, passages that I regularly remember, reread, contemplate, or visit for inspiration, guidance, wisdom, or relief from life’s
inevitable pain and despair. Because they have helped me in my quest for answers, for strength, for joy, and for meaning, these texts have become intimate companions and counselors. They have at various moments aroused, stirred, and redirected my passions. It is these texts that propel me to continue to teach. It is their continuing, mesmerizing effect on students of all ages that convinces me of my mission as a language teacher: to exchange old blood for new. And each adumbrates a particular dimension of what it means to be Hispanic.

My list of indispensable texts begins with two lines from the “Poema de Myo Cid” from the 12th century:

¡Dios, qué buen vassallo, si oviesse buen señore. (Pidal, 1966, p. 105)

(God, what a great employee! If only he/she had a good boss!)

Rodrigo Díaz, el Cid, has been mistreated by his king and exiled from his home and family. As he emerges in the poem, the Cid embodies all the characteristics still at the heart of Hispanic culture: a ferocious sense of self tempered by a deep loyalty, even submission, to the king and to the church. He is the Fearless warrior, faithful husband, tender father, reverent Catholic, honorable friend, and dutiful servant of his king. Our moral qualities and the actions they reflect are not dependent on how we are received by our superiors, society, or the world. Unfair treatment does not justify a betrayal of principle. Antes quebrar que doblar: Better break than bend. The reverse proverb exists in English.

My next example comes from the 14th century. When Juan Ruiz, Arcipreste de Hita, a priest, catches sight of the beautiful Doña Endrina crossing the plaza, his reaction, in the Libro de buen amor, captures forever the inexhaustible energy, power, and beauty of youth:

¡Ay, Dios, quán fermosa viene doña Endrina por la plaça!
qué talle, qué donaire, qué alto cuello de garça! (Ruiz, 1972, p. 177)

(O God! How beautiful Doña Endrina is, coming across the plaza!
What a figure! What grace! What a long, slender throat, like a heron’s!)

I have often thought of these lines to remind myself that life forever renews itself in vigorous and beautiful youth. But a scrutiny of these lines discloses a fundamental obstacle to human understanding, a fundamental task for the language teacher. The poetic power of the image, Doña Endrina’s “alto cuello de garça,” so immediate and provocative in Spanish, descends in translation to what in English sounds profoundly unpoetic, an almost comic invocation of a heron. Our culture determines our sense of the beautiful, which is a central truth any language teacher will strive to show, not tell, in every possible way.
Next, from the 15th century, a moment in which a young man, riding through the mountains, comes upon a beautiful young rancherita. The poem is one of a series called serranillas, by the Marqués de Santillana.

Moça tan fermosa
non vî en la frontera,
como una vaquera
de la Finojosa. (Mendoza, 1994, p. 50)

(Such a beautiful girl
I never saw along the border
like that cowgirl
from la Finojosa.)

Although la Finojosa rejects her errant suitor and he rides away disappointed, the memory of that moment, of her beauty, remains with him and with us forever.

From the early 16th century, Juan Boscán captured in three short lines the joy and pain of a lover rejected.

Si no os hubiera mirado,
no penara;
pero tampoco os mirara. (Boscán, 1954, p. 202)

(If I hadn’t seen you, there would have been no pain.
But neither would I have seen you!)

Sadder than the pain of love would be the emptiness of never having loved.

From the 16th century, Spain’s Golden Age of art and literature, comes one famous verse from San Juan de la Cruz. In the midst of life’s fever, the simple joys, San Juan de la Cruz reminds us, are what keep us from despair, the daily repetition of

la cena que recrea y enamora. (p. 108)
(the supper that restores life and love).

I often think of these lines as I am on my way home in the evening. No stresses in our professional or public lives can dim the simple joy of returning home.

Santa Teresa de Avila left magnificent books of mysticism, guides to prayer. But she penned a few poems. This one is surely as beautiful and simple a prayer as was ever written.

Nada te turbe,
nada te espante,
todo se pasa,
Occasionally, a passage has left me ravaged by its musicality, the sheer beauty of sound and image. Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer coupled to the incomparably beautiful sounds of the Spanish language a powerful depiction of love’s folly, of the pain and pleasure of memory, of the incomparable mystery of time.

Volverán las oscuras golondrinas
en tu balcón sus nidos a colgar;
y otra vez, con sus alas a tus cristales
jugando llamarán.
Pero aquéllas que el vuelo refrenaban
Tu hermosura y mi dicha contemplar,
Aquéllas que aprendieron nuestros nombres . . .
Esas . . . ¡no volverán! (p. 321)

Returning again the dark swallows
will hang their nests on your balcony
and again, they will tap their wings playfully
against the glass.
But those who paused in flight
to contemplate your beauty and my happiness,
Those who learned our names . . .
Those. . . . will not return!

García Lorca, thought by many to be Spain’s greatest poet of the 20th century, left a book of verses that has held me in a state of wonder and awe for nearly 40 years: El romancero gitano (The Gypsy Ballads). This little book spreads before us unique portraits of human sensibilities, a gallery of life in southern Spain. The book begins with a haunting ballad of how a little boy imagines, and then encounters, death. In the ballad that follows, we experience with a young gypsy her frightening transition from girl to woman,
her first intimations of the hunger and violence that accompany sexual passion. In another, a young gypsy nun, living in supposed renunciation of the world, finds her five senses aroused within a conventual space adorned with brilliant colors, redolent of sensual odors, hung with vibrant embroideries. Her heart quickens as she sees dashing young men on horseback outside her convent. Her eyes, her ears, her fingers, her nose, and her taste all report a world that teases and tempts her. Sexual longings, like “rivers made to stand on end,” illuminated by the light of “twenty suns,” beckon to her. The gypsy nun hesitates momentarily, then sighs and continues quietly to sew as patterns of light and shadow seem to play a game of chess for her soul. For the Hispanic experience of life, our bodies and spirits strive in perpetual conflict. There can be no truce.

Our next gypsy portrait depicts a young man, handsome and well dressed, a bit of a dandy, dying as his cousins knife him to death, perhaps because he does not seem manly enough to uphold the family honor. Lorca hinted that the cousins may be jealous of Antoñito el Camborio, too cute and too gentle. As the beautiful young man falls dead, Lorca captured in a description of Antoñito’s profile against the sky one of the most widely held convictions of Hispanic culture: Each human being plays a unique, unrepeatable part in the human story.

Tres golpes de sangre tuvo
y se murió de perfil.
Viva moneda que nunca
se volverá a repetir. (p. 388)

(Three bloody blows he took
and died on his back, his profile raised.
Living coin that will never be struck again.)

From Antonio Machado (1982), in the 20th century, comes what for me is perhaps the most mysterious and haunting of all lines of Spanish poetry. Evening is falling, and the poet is walking along, with his feet on the Spanish countryside, his soul wandering through life.

Yo voy soñando caminos
de la tarde. ¡Las colinas
doradas, los verdes pinos,
las polvorientas encinas . . .
¿Adónde irá el camino?
Yo voy cantando, viajero
a lo largo del sendero . . .
—La tarde cayendo está—. (p. 345)
(I dream my way
down evening roads.)
Gold hills, green pines,
and dusty oaks . . .
Where can the road be leading?
I sing my way along,
the road stretches away,
evening is coming on.) (Trueblood, 1982)

Machado’s lines capture a mystery felt throughout Hispanic culture—
greatest confusion and greatest lucidity—a dreamlike walk down a dimly lit
road of gold, of green, and of dust.

Finally and most profoundly, from Don Quijote, two parallel declarations,
one an affirmation, the other a negation, one at the beginning of the
story (de Cervantes Saavedran, 1984, I,5), the other near the end of the sec-
ond part (II,53). Taken together, they are the clearest possible statement of
the Hispanic conviction that we are who we are by dint of our will, our de-
sire, and our deeds.

In the first scene, Don Quijote, quite mad, lies beaten on the ground. A
friendly neighbor and laborer, Pedro Alonso, comes along and puts the broken-
up body of his friend on his donkey and leads Don Quijote, Alonso Quijana,
home. Along the way, the mad knight imagines himself and Pedro Alonso
characters in a famous Moorish tale of love. The startled peasant corrects
Don Quijote: I am only Pedro Alonso, he insists, and you are my neighbor,
Señor Quijana. Don Quijote protests:

Yo sé quién soy, y sé que puedo ser no sólo los que he dicho, sino todos los Doce
Pares de Francia.
(I know how I am, and I can be not just the ones I have named, but all the Twelve
Peers of France.)

In Part II, Sancho finally gets his island to govern. After many cruel
tricks played on him by the islanders, Sancho recognizes the difference be-
tween who he is and who he has imagined himself to be. He renounces his
governorship and embraces the simple life he has known and the person he
truly is—Sancho Panza.

Abrid camino, señores míos, y dejadme volver a mi antigua libertad; dejadme
que vaya a buscar la vida pasada. . . . yo no nací para ser gobernador.
(Make way, my lords, and let me return to my former freedom; let me leave in
search of the life I once had. I was not born to be a governor.)

First, by affirmation, then by negation, these two scenes affirm the cen-
tral theme of Cervantes’s masterpiece and a central truth of the Hispanic tra-
dition: We choose who we are to be. By an act of our will, we forge our true
selves. Each of the above lines of poetry and the two scenes in Don Quijote
have, over many, many years, reminded me of love, of pain, of beauty, of
mysteries I can never fully comprehend, of the ineffable gift of freedom to craft my life, to discover and then to become the unique person that I choose to be. These texts hold before us depictions of the Hispanic experience of life, unique gifts for all humanity.

But what of grammar? I began this discussion with a description of the extreme position, the method we inherited from classical studies. Although it is clear that we must devise another strategy, one incorporating a spoken language, we must not fall under sway of the grammarphobes. In the study of modern languages, we do our students an unspeakable disservice if we allow ourselves to be persuaded that because we are teaching a living, breathing language, we must quickly skip over grammar studies or, even more insidiously, we must go at it little by little, give a student time to “become comfortable with the language,” introduce grammar slowly so as not to bore or discourage our audience. A recently popular, graduated series for middle school and high school classes in Spanish and in French followed this approach, emphasizing so-called direct communication, keeping students in the present tense for much of the first year. They may have felt good about it all, but those classes were babbling baby talk.

Grammar maps the partially logical structure upon which language is built. Amid tragic and unending disorder in the human family, grammar conveys linguistic order, allowing any part of the human family to share in the language and hence the experiences of another. We teachers must decide which points are indispensable for coherent exchange and emphasize them from the first moments of study. In Spanish, I have learned that mastery of the verb system forms the axis around which the language spins. A first-year, nonnative student of Spanish should be well into the irregular preterites by November. If they are not memorized absolutely and without hesitation, that student will never achieve more than a shaky hold on the language. If a native speaker does not master the verb system, teaching subtle nuances of the subjunctive will prove an almost impossible task.

Perhaps the study of grammar would not have suffered such pitiless rejection in our time if we had been a bit more inventive and had connected, from the first days of the first year, our grammar lessons to great and accessible works of literature, short pieces of immediate appeal to be repeated and memorized, crucial first steps toward apprehending what and how life can be in another tongue. In Spanish, as my earlier remarks have probably suggested, poetry offers itself as our great ally, awakening a deep feeling for how culture and language are one. Both Antonio Machado and Federico García Lorca have written many exquisite poems in which all verbs are in the present tense, the vocabulary simple, and the themes diverse and profound. Many of Machado’s best poems alternate between the preterit and the imperfect tenses, which is ideal for when we are about to probe that mystery. The principle is a simple one: Short and compelling poems display and reinforce in their language a particular point of grammar under consideration.
Most important, responsible teaching demands that we require that students learn the poem. In recent times, to ask a student to memorize something has become akin to asking him or her to study grammar. We have become terrified of being told that the exercise is boring. Such thinking is terribly flawed. It is like dreaming of building a cathedral and then being unwilling to think of the bricks and mortar and wood. I have many times spent an entire class repeating and dramatizing a poem with students; at the end of class, everyone leaves the room having learned the words: beautifully arranged words, grammatically correct, music to the ears, and a message for the soul.

Finally, language and literature are the most enduring mirror to the mind and soul of a culture. Two of the most disarmingly simple poems, one in English and one in Spanish, can suggest, in two different treatments of a journey, profound differences between Anglo and Hispanic culture. Federico García Lorca’s “Canción del jinete” offers us, I believe, the Hispanic version of Robert Frost’s celebrated “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.” Both poems deal with travel, and both poems tantalizingly invite us to relate the journey in the poem to the larger journey of life, of the spirit. Frost’s poem is reticent, ambiguous, spare, a journey interrupted, a brief cessation of motion. As he reflects on the contrast between the woods, “lovely, dark, and deep,” and the long journey before him, Frost’s traveler may for a moment consider ending the effort. Is he willing to continue, “miles to go before I sleep”? Perhaps not.

Lorca’s poem, by contrast, thunders with energy, the frenetic, forward motion of the pony into the darkness and into death. Although the rider can see his destination, he will never reach that distant goal. We are not told why, only that death will cut short his journey. But there is no hesitation, no faltering, no turning back or even slowing the gait. Lorca’s rider, on his little black mare, carries with him toward inescapable death all the relentless energy and resolve of Hispanic tradition: El Cid, Don Quijote, Santa Teresa, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, Benito Juárez, Miguel de Unamuno. I have spent countless hours with students reflecting on this simple little masterpiece. It is ideal for the last third of the first semester of first-year Spanish. In a course for native speakers, it could come in the second week.

Córdoba. Lejana y sola.  
Jaca negra, luna grande  
y aceitunas en mi alforja.  
Aunque sepa los caminos  
yo nunca llegaré a Córdoba.  
Por el llano, por el viento,  
jaca negra, luna roja;  
la Muerta me está mirando  
desde las torres de Córdoba.  
¡Ay qué camino tan largo!
¡Ay mi jaca valerosa!
¡Ay que la Muerte me espera
antes de llegar a Córdoba!
Córdoba. Lejana y sola. (Lorca, 1994, p. 388)

(Córdoba. Distant and alone.
A black pony, a large moon,
and olives in my saddlebags,
although I know the road,
I will never reach Córdoba.
Over the plain, into the wind,
a black pony, a blood-red moon;
Death is watching me
from the towers of Córdoba.
Ah, what a long road!
Ah, my brave little pony!
Ah, Death awaits me
before I reach Córdoba!
Córdoba. Distant and alone.)

In his great work, Misión de la universidad, José Ortega y Gasset (1968)
described culture as doing and being, a made thing, evolving as the product
of stressful action, ever shifting as human beings shift and strain to make
their way through life. Culture for Ortega embraces guarantee

el conjunto de lo que hacemos o somos, esa terrible faena . . . que cada hombre
tiene que ejecutar por su cuenta . . . de sostenerse en el Universo, de llevarse o
conducirse por entre cosas y seres del mundo. (p. 58)

([Culture signifies] a joining of what we do to what we are, that terrible task . . .
which each human being must execute for himself . . . to sustain himself in the
Universe, to carry himself and to guide himself among all the objects and beings
of this world.)

We can be told of those qualities, of that view of life, in a “culture” course.
Or we can feel the truth of that world in new blood, miraculously quickened
and changed by language.

Notes

1. I am grateful to my daughter, Teresa Cigarroa Keck, for pointing me toward this marvelous book.
3. These famous lines come from the first scene of the poem.
4. The famous encounter with Doña Endrina begins at stanza 653 of the poem.
References


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Examining the Ethnic Minority Student Experience at Predominantly White Institutions: A Case Study

LEE JONES, JEANETT CASTELLANOS, AND DARNELL COLE

Abstract: The researchers of this qualitative study conducted four focus groups to explore the college student experience of ethnic minorities in an institution of higher education. The purpose of the study was threefold: (a) to examine the experiences of ethnic minority students at a predominantly White institution, (b) to discuss the similarities and differences of the experiences among the four groups, and (c) to identify student perspectives on the delivery of student services in the institution. The study examined African American, Asian-Pacific American, Chicano/Latino, and Native American student experiences at a research institution.

Resumen: Los investigadores de este estudio cualitativo llevaron a cabo cuatro grupos para explorar la experiencia de estudiantes universitarios de minoría étnica en una institución de educación superior. El propósito del estudio es tripartita: (a) examina las experiencias de estudiantes de minoría étnica en una institución predominantemente blanca, (b) discute las semejanzas y diferencias entre los cuatro grupos, e (c) identifica las perspectivas de los estudiantes en cuanto a los servicios de la institución.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2000), the United States is undergoing a radical change in terms of its racial/ethnic demographics; it is referred to as the “diversification of America” or the “browning of America.” Casas and Vasquez (1996) highlighted the increased significance of racial/ethnic minorities as “a demographic force” in the United States. They reported that ethnic minorities (African Americans, Chicano/Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Pacific Americans) constitute 23% of the population, and consequently, the nation’s educational system is experiencing a tremendous influx of immigrant students. By the year 2010, 46% of the nation’s school-age youth will be students of color (Banks & Banks, 1999). Ethnic minorities, however, remain undereducated despite the growing numbers and the vacillating progress in educational access by underrepresented groups in American higher education over the past 40 years (Astin, 1982, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

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Minorities have experienced for decades the unequal distribution of education and question the quality, scope, and content of their higher education (Astin, 1985; Castellanos & Gloria, in press; Kerr, 1991). The proportion of minority students participating in college has been rising but still lags behind attendance rates of the national norm. For example, nearly 43% of White high school graduates ages 18 to 24 attend college, compared to 36% of African Americans and 33% of Latinos/Latinas (Carter & Wilson, 1996). Furthermore, nearly half (47%) of all minorities in higher education attend community colleges (Carter & Wilson, 1995). Moreover, ethnic minority undergraduate representation at 4-year institutions continues to be dismal, with African Americans constituting 12.3%, Chicano/Latinos constituting 8.7%, and Native Americans accounting for less than 1% of all higher education students (Wilds & Wilson, 1998). The impending cultural revolution, as well as institutional survival, calls for a pluralistic perspective in higher education to enlarge the support system for ethnic minority students in terms of access, quality, and persistence. Institutions are encouraged to develop and provide appropriate services and resources not simply because of the “browning of America” but because the development and success of all students should be of primary concern for institutions of higher education.

The changing demographics presents a challenge to the academy, particularly in creating a climate that is conducive and reflective of the type of students needed to ethnically diversify higher education institutions. More specifically, institutions are confronted with a growing minority population that has a different value system, an intensified awareness of their minority status, a need for climate inclusiveness, and who are first generation to attend college (Astone & Nunez-Wormack, 1990; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Valverde & Castenell, 1998). These students are also confronted with a challenge that requires managing and coping with psychological distress as they negotiate the campus milieu. Literature supports the notion of ethnic distress and the challenges coupled with being of “minority status” (Saldana, 1994; Uba, 1994). Studies on minorities in higher education demonstrate the necessity of ethnic organizations and the importance of the arrangement of an ethnic community for minority students to reduce their minority status stress. Moreover, the existence and importance of ethnic-specific organizations and centers in almost every higher education institution with a sizable enrollment of minority students have been noted (Rooney, 1985).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine ethnic minority students’ college experiences at a predominately White 4-year research institution and their perspectives of the campus climate, school resources, and quality of student service programs provided. More specifically, this is a qualitative study in which ethnic minority students who frequented a university cross-
cultural center were asked to participate in focus groups and share their thoughts and opinions. The construct of ethnic minority is composed of the following underrepresented groups: African American, Native American, Asian-Pacific American, and Chicano/Latino. The research attempts to reveal and discuss the perspectives and experiences of students of color as related to services provided within a postsecondary institution. The specific research questions addressed were as follows:

1. What is the perceived campus climate of ethnic minorities at this predominantly White institution (PWI)?
2. What is the ethnic minority experience at this PWI as it relates to services provided by student affairs?
3. What role does the cross-cultural center play in their undergraduate experience?
4. What recommendations do students have for the university in general and student services to enhance their experience?

**Cultural Centers**

Historically, most PWIs, in wake of the school desegregation era, reluctantly permitted the establishment of cultural centers for ethnic minority student populations. Subsequently, there were debates on the importance, value, and role of the cross-cultural centers. Groups questioned their existence, but the centers prevailed beyond speculation and have remained as resources. Today, particularly during this time of demographic change, cultural centers have been pivotal in providing safe havens for ethnic minority student groups who have traditionally been denied full access and, in most instances, any access to PWIs. Some cross-cultural centers have, over time, become integral to the institutional infrastructure, yet most remain marginalized. This reinforces some institutions’ recognition of the problem, but there remains a lack of a full commitment to the unequal and inequitable college experiences that relegate a significant and disproportionate number of ethnic minority students to attrition, stop out, and drop out. Despite limited institutional support, ethnic-cultural centers have continued to serve the social, political, outreach, academic, and other cultural needs of students within the campus milieu. Moreover, they demonstrate the universities’ responsible and culturally sensitive position toward diversity, creating an environment that acknowledges, respects, and enhances multiculturalism.

Cross-cultural centers, multicultural centers, or independent cultural centers, such as Chicano/Latino centers, African American centers, and Native American centers, have been available to provide facilities for academic, social, and recreational events to promote cross-cultural communication (Princes, 1994). These centers are established to provide a location and facility for programming various academic, social, and political events. They exist to support ethnic students in pursuing their educational goals.
while retaining their cultural ties (Young, 1989). Through these centers, students learn about their cultures, traditions, practices, beliefs, and ancestry. They also ascertain knowledge of other cultures and are able to join intercultural groups that address social problems of various ethnic minority communities. Moreover, students take part in constructive thinking and critical dialogue around community problems in attempt to alleviate them. And most cultural centers assist with institutional recruitment, retention, and academic support (i.e., mentoring and tutoring) of ethnic minorities to help them achieve their highest educational potential. Yet these cultural centers cannot successfully assist a student without significant institutional collaboration. This study does not challenge the worth of cultural centers on predominantly White campuses but the abandonment of other student services in supporting the collaborative development of a still growing yet underserved student population.

Theoretical Framework

Contextualizing student involvement in relation to student services as a lens for gauging institutional climate is a useful concept for interpreting the perspectives of students of color at PWIs. Using a theoretical framework that recognizes the importance of hearing student voices and the impact of their college encounters, this study used a qualitative framework with student involvement theory to complement the literature based on the ethnic minority experience. Specifically, the authors reviewed the literature on students of color in relation to student involvement, retention, attrition, isolation, marginalization, student satisfaction, and dissatisfaction (Abrahamowicz, 1988; Astin, 1984; Loeb & Magee, 1992; Madrazo-Peterson, 1978; Mallinckrodt, 1988; Steward & Germain, 1992).

Conceptual underpinnings supporting this study rely significantly on student experiences and their perceptions of the campus racial/ethnic climate. Grounded in research that supports unique perspectives and experiences by racial/ethnic groups, Hurtado et al. (1998) defined institutional campus climate by four interrelated dimensions. They are (a) institutions’ historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various racial/ethnic groups, (b) numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups, (c) the psychological climate of perceptions and attitudes between and among groups, and (d) behavioral climate dimension characterized by intergroup relations.

The first and third dimensions, above, are of particular interest in the context of this study, yet the third dimension is partly captured in the literature review. Although not directly defined within the parameters of the historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion, cultural centers have served to ameliorate the past exclusionary practices endorsed in PWIs. Many students who identify themselves as an ethnic minority on predominantly White campuses (as well as nonminority students) look to cross-cultural centers as institu-
tional support systems in which they develop academic and social networks, opportunities for campus involvement, and ultimately a haven that improves campus climate. Last, the fourth dimension suggests individual interpretations of institutions’ racial/ethnic climate are derived and influenced, in part, from the extent to which individuals are involved in their campus milieu.

Established mainly from empirical data, student involvement theory further extends this dimension and provides viable interpretations of students’ college experiences and its probable impact on various student outcomes (Astin, 1991, 1993). One outcome measure, central to most postsecondary institutions and thus one of the most researched, is student retention. It is hypothesized and often validated that students who are more involved in the campus community and consequently feel a greater sense of belonging typically stay in college longer, with a high probability for graduation. However, where students of color are concerned, Hurtado and Carter (1997) suggested “that greater attention needs to be paid to ethnic minority students’ subjective sense of integration in campus life” (p. 324). Hence, the quality of student involvement opportunities has an impact on an ethnic minority student’s involvement and subsequently a student’s sense of integration.

Literature Review

The ethnic minority experience is said to be distinctly different from that of majority students at PWIs (Bennett, Cole, & Thompson, 2000; Fleming, 1985; Uba, 1994). Research has indicated that a minority status bestows an additional burden of stress on ethnic minority students and would be associated with an increased risk for negative outcomes beyond that which is attributable to the stresses of being a student at a highly competitive academic institution (Saldana, 1994). An ethnic minority student’s subjective sense of integration into campus life, mentioned above by Hurtado and Carter (1997), can likely be gleaned from the extent to which stress is derived from students’ minority status, interpersonal relationships and the student services that mediate their college experiences, and their subsequent subjective sense of integration.

Uba (1994, p. 120) wrote that a minority status can make a person vulnerable to being cast as an interloper or scapegoat by other Americans. Specifically within PWIs, minority status stress may likely be the antithesis of White privilege within that environment. Therefore, just as White privilege can be embodied in many shapes and forms, so too can minority status stress be experienced. Smedley, Myers, and Harrell (1993) concluded that ethnic minority students in a dominant-cultured campus would experience stress on a variety of levels. These include (a) social climate stresses, (b) interracial stresses, (c) racial discrimination, (d) within-group stresses, and (e) achievement stress. In this study, social climate gauged by student interracial interaction and racial discrimination frame much of the supporting research. The
variance of within-group differences, however, may be skewed by students’ participation in cross-cultural centers and the self-selection to participate in this study.

Social climate stresses, as referred to Smedley et al. (1993), address the student’s view of campus climate, that is, whether the student feels isolated or underrepresented; such examples of social climate deal with not having multiculturalism incorporated in the curriculum, minimal ethnic faculty representation, and misunderstanding of diversity. From these and other social climate themes, volumes of research have been published to enhance the ethnic minority experience in the academy (Bennett, 1995; Brown, 1991; Gandara, 1993; Rendon & Hope, 1996). However, Turner (1994) reminded us how students of color are still “guests in someone else’s house” (p. 356). The author vividly presented voices of alienated students who find PWIs “a cold and lonely place” (p. 355). These students describe the campus climate as nonwelcoming and a place where racism is encountered. The impact of such a chilly institutional climate is off-putting and reaffirms that students of color must be provided with social support and be valued and respected (Caplan, 1974; Cobb, 1976). McGrath, Gutierrez, and Valadez (2000) examined the significance of social support for new students entering college. The researchers highlighted students’ self-reported assessment of social support and feelings of loneliness. Moreover, they reported that after testing the results from the College Student Social Support Scale, students of color felt less support from friends than did their White counterparts.

Minority status stress consists of two levels: (a) interracial stresses and (b) racism and discrimination. Interracial stress deals with the interaction of ethnic minority students and the dominant culture, whereas racism and discrimination involves being mistreated or disrespected because of one’s race. Widely cited studies such as Nettles (1988) and Allen (1991) report that students of color experience lower levels of integration and higher levels of alienation and discrimination at predominantly White campuses. Moreover, Sedlacek’s (1987) work on African Americans at PWIs highlights “the different perspectives of white faculty on African American students, the inconsistent reinforcement” (p. 490), and different expectations based on the variable of ethnicity. Subsequently, Renner (1998) helped secondary institutions and higher education to recognize that de facto segregation in our schools suggests that the majority of White students still attend predominately White elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions. The interaction with diverse races and cultures in these environments are minimal, which minimizes their understanding of multiculturalism. Moreover, Renner highlighted that more than half of all White students attend a college or university where Black students make up less than 10% of the student body (excluding historically Black colleges and universities). Consequently, only 1% of all institutions accounts for 7% of the Black students in colleges.
Chang (2000) contradicted such dismal findings and suggested racial circumstances have improved at PWIs during the past 30 years. This is largely a result of institutional and “diversity related” (p. 156) efforts. Yet he did not overlook that certain incidents are still motivated by racial antipathy, and consequently, this can be devastating for ethnic minority students. Similarly, Miville, Molla, and Sedlacek (1992) examined tolerance toward diversity and found that students are growing more tolerant toward multiculturalism. In particular, the study found that students were more open to intercultural attitudes and more willing to learn about diversity. Rebutting the findings by Miville et al., Saddlemire (1996) argued that White students have an inaccurate understanding of the African American culture and its values. In addition, he reported White students’ desire to room with people of similar background and their strong desire for non-Whites to assimilate. Consequently, the researcher supported the need for positive interaction between Whites and African Americans and the call to broaden first-year students’ perspectives through institutionally directed efforts.

Cultural centers are starting points in institutional efforts and are often described as “a home away from home, a place to deal with personal and academic problems” (Turner, 1994, p. 362). Similarly, Hawkins (1992) suggested that a Minority Affairs Office is of utmost importance to supporting ethnic minority students at PWIs. This study also recognizes the role of ethnic centers and further evaluates the ethnic minority voice by highlighting students’ thoughts on their university experience, their needs, and recommendations. Special attention is placed on ethnic centers due to their valuable role in the ethnic minority college experience. Moreover, the key factors here are student recommendations that encourage institutional collaboration among student service entities to assist in positively developing students’ subjective sense of integration into the campus environment. In any ethnic or racial group, there will always be within-group stresses, pressures from people of one’s same race, pressures to show loyalty to one’s community, and pressures on how to act or behave. An environment that is knowledgeable, understanding, and proactive in establishing venues where students can express their differences constructively may, however, prove to be a greater and more long-lasting support to student retention and graduation rates.

**Method**

*Research design.* The study is a qualitative research design that provides descriptions of experiences (Geertz, 1973) and emphasizes the voice, experience, and student culture of the participants. Moreover, the study seeks the understanding of the ethnic minority undergraduate student experience at a PWI. Data were collected through focus groups and observations that were each 2 hours long.
Kuh and Andreas (1991) supported the practice of qualitative methods in the field of student affairs. The authors encouraged chief administrators to rely on such methodology for supporting their daily practice. Complementing Kuh and Andreas, Kuh, Whitt, and Shedd (1987) encouraged higher education professionals to “learn about student life by becoming engaged with students in their living environments, the library, their playing fields” (p. 397). Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Goetz and LeCompte (1984) supported the contribution of qualitative methods to any subject under investigation.

**Institution.** The selected university was a predominantly White, midsize research-type institution with approximately 20,000 students. An estimated 1,500 students were ethnic minorities. The site was a public, 4-year institution in the Northwest coast, with an estimate of 15 faculty members of color (both tenure and nontenured). The institution has an academic Ethnic Studies Program and a cross-cultural center made up of four individual centers that serve African American, Chicano/Latino, Native American, and Asian-Pacific American students.

**Participants.** The data for the present study included a subset of students for each ethnic minority group: African American, Asian-Pacific American, Chicano/Latino, and Native American. There were a total of 35 student participants: 14 males and 21 females; 7 African Americans, 7 Asian-Pacific Islanders, 11 Chicano/Latinos, and 10 Native Americans. Researchers noted that students who participated in this study were generally active campuswide. Thus, these students’ responses may be different from those less actively involved. All student participants were undergraduates who frequently visited the cultural center; their participation was encouraged but completely voluntary.

**Procedures.** To ensure campuswide representation, flyers were posted across campus and throughout the cross-cultural centers to recruit participants. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and its potential to enhance their university experience. Dinner was provided to increase the attendance of all focus groups. A selected number of four focus groups were conducted to represent all four ethnic minority groups, and a minimum of 7 students was required to initiate dialogue with each focus group. Each group had separate sessions with the researcher, and each session lasted approximately 2 hours. Hence, the focus groups were conducted at each individual center (i.e., Chicano/Latino Center, Asian-Pacific American Center, etc.), which make up one entity, the cross-cultural center. Topics discussed throughout the focus group interviews included general campus climate, student involvement, student experience, campus services, and rec-
ommendations to improve their undergraduate education. Examples of specific questions are as follows:

1. What has been your experience as a student at this institution?
2. What is the campus climate at this institution?
3. What has been your interaction with your peers on campus?
4. What has been your involvement in student activities/organizations (both ethnic and non-ethnic specific)?
5. What are your opinions on the university student services and programs?
6. What role does the cross-cultural center play in your undergraduate experience?
7. What recommendations do you have for the institution to enhance your experience (etc.)?

Each focus group was audiorecorded, and extensive notes were taken throughout the encounter. Moreover, all tapes were transcribed to assist in the analysis of the data. Facial expressions, body movement, and nonverbals were also considered as part of the dialogue. The focus group discussant led the discussion by presenting the question and providing an open forum for discussion. Participants were encouraged to answer freely and without reservation. Ethical research practices were used throughout the study. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and the ethical guidelines by signing a consent form. All identities were kept confidential to provide minimal risk to the participants. All data were used to increase the understanding of the undergraduate experience of 35 student participants who attended a PWI in hopes of improving their experiences and services offered.

Analysis. Data analysis began with a review of the original proposal or plans for the study. The original research questions were revisited, and the researchers discussed the initial inquiry. Following, the data were scanned and reread. There was a search for regularities, commonalities, patterns, and themes that could be transformed into categories. According to LeCompte and Schensul (1999) and Schensul, LeCompte, Nastasi, and Borgatti (1999), the task of sorting the data into piles according to a common pattern and searching through phrases, words, and repeated answers assisted to identify the coding categories. Specifically, this occurred through the counting of items to best define and locate the themes within the data records. Systematically, through constant comparison and analytic induction (Glaser & Strauss, 1965, 1967), patterns emerged. To ensure internal validity, the three members of the research team reviewed each data packet separately and identified emerging patterns. Once each member reviewed the data, the three reviews were compared in a research feedback data session. Upon initial comparison, three categories (general campus climate, cross-cultural center, and student recommendations) were common among the researchers, and three additional categories were developed during the data session.
Results

The results were divided into six main categories: (a) general campus climate, (b) student experiences, (c) student involvement, (d) cross-cultural center, (e) departmental units, and (f) student recommendations. Each subsection provides the voices of the students and their experiences and perspectives on the identified areas.

**General campus climate.** Many of the students reported a lack of support for diversity on campus. All four groups (African American, Asian-Pacific American, Chicano/Latino, and Native American) questioned the university commitment toward diversity (i.e., scholarships, faculty representation, and a welcoming campus climate). Specifically, the students reported a nonwelcoming environment and addressed the lack of representation of students of color on campus. For example, African American students reported that “the institution administrators spoke a lot about diversity but acted minimally toward creating a culturally diverse, tolerant and sensitive environment.” Furthermore, students perceived a minimal effort to recruit faculty of color for the 16 faculty of color who departed during one academic year. They also reported a sense of “not belonging and feeling different.”

Asian-Pacific American students reported the environment “reinforces White pride and closes the student’s mind instead of opening it to diversity.” These students further identified a stronger support system for White students, which affirmed white students’ ideologies. Last, the Asian-Pacific American group emphasized a celebration of mainstream identity, which lacks the responsibility of addressing diversity.

Chicano/Latino and Native American students also highlighted encountering blatant racism on campus. Chicano/Latino students identified the cross-cultural center as a scapegoat for all efforts that relate to ethnic minority students, thus minimizing campuswide responsibility on issues of diversity. Similarly, Native American students highlighted a recent printing of a cartoon strip in the university newspaper portraying Native Americans as “savage-like and brutal.” The silent response of administrators reinforced a hostile environment rather than celebrating multiculturalism.

**Student experiences.** There were mixed findings on the students’ experiences at the university. One set of students expressed that race and ethnicity played a significant role in their college experience. Two groups voiced a sense of alienation and facing discrimination, whereas several students in one group reported having fewer problems with such issues. Specifically, the Asian-Pacific American group reported recognizing a major color line between White students and students of color at their student center. Students reported experiencing overt racism and not feeling safe to object
openly to such behavior. A particular example included a student who walked around with a T-shirt, which had the confederate flag that read, “the South shall rise again.” Consequently, ethnic minority students reported isolating themselves when feeling targeted. Hence, students interpreted this form of overt racism as alienating. Moreover, they highlighted that the perceptions of these types of incidents for a White student and a student of color are different.

Native Americans also voiced a sense of alienation and reported discrimination, whereas another group of Native American students reported having fewer problems because “they looked White.” Yet Native Americans whose skin complexion was light were often questioned by their White peers about their ethnic related involvement—that is, “Why do you do ethnic things if you are White?” Once the Native American students revealed their ethnic identity, some reported differential treatment from their White peers. As a result, Native Americans perceived a lack of cultural support from their White counterparts.

Students of color not only identified ethnic segregation from White students but also identified separatism between ethnic groups. The ethnic minority groups did not sense a collaborative effort to interact, unite, and form coalitions. Many feared rejection in their attempts to collaborate with other ethnic minorities and thus made minimal effort to dialogue about their mutual cause. Moreover, bicultural students reported not “feeling fully accepted” and discussed the difficulties they encountered when “not looking ethnic enough.” Overall, a majority of the focus group participants did not sense support from other ethnic groups and recognized the need to associate and create what they called “peer allies” to strengthen their efforts and empower themselves. Specific examples include joining efforts for a multicultural conference on student retention for ethnic minority students, more interactions with the ethnic organization representatives, and bisemester meetings that allow students to share their efforts and goals for the year.

The minimal representation of ethnic minority students on campus created additional expectations for these highly involved students also to represent ethnic minority communities in higher education. In particular, they saw multiple roles in their college experience and found academics to only be a part of the experience. They expressed a responsibility (and a sense of obligation) to represent and voice themselves to make a difference in the community. Students saw themselves as a part of society instrumental in changing stereotypes and racist minds. Most of the group participants identified a responsibility to serve their communities and emphasized the importance of assisting their people. Other additional responsibilities included representing and voicing the opinions of their student community, being instrumental in breaking stereotypes, and consciously and unconsciously representing diversity.
Student involvement. Student involvement is a critical dimension to the college experience. Reviewing some statements on integration and college participation, there was a distinct trend among students. In general, most of the involvement revolved around the cross-cultural center but was not limited to this facility. Whereas Latinos emphasized the importance of participating in the greater university campus life, Chicano/Latino students highlighted the significance of being active on campus. Specifically, they expressed the “importance of being a change agent and being influential in a PWI.” Furthermore, this student subgroup emphasized the importance of representing “the underrepresented” across campus and challenging those without an open mind. One student explained how he “needed to roll with the punches” and remain visible and in prominent positions until the next generation of students arrives.

Conversely, the majority of African American students admitted to limiting their interactions across campus. Most of the African American students reported participating exclusively in ethnic-specific (multicultural) events and organizations. However, a few reported being involved in non-ethnic-specific organizations, such as the student government, activities programming board, and yearbook. Students who did not participate in nonethnic organizations reported they did not have time, whereas those who did reiterated that they “felt like outsiders” in non-ethnic-specific organizations. They identified a lack of belonging and nonrepresentation of their values; this made them stop attending and participating in such events. Moreover, some students reported they did not have an interest for the resources available and that many were not geared for students of color.

Cross-cultural center. All groups were pleased with the services provided by the cross-cultural center. Three of the groups identified the center as “a place to hang out.” In addition, the unit was described as a “place to relax,” “stress free,” and “a good place to address personal and social issues.” They also identified the center as a “haven, a home away from home, a place I can be myself, and a part of my roots.” Specifically, Asian students identified the center as a “different experience from the rest of the university, more positive and pleasant.” It was referred to as “a place to think of one’s identity and pick up cultural pieces.” Latino students identified the center as “a home away from home” where Native Americans associated the center as a “place to interact with other tribe members,” “a place that provides strength for my community to work together,” and “a location with a sense of camaraderie which helps to solidify identity.” Overall, all groups highlighted the benefits to the facility as contributing to their retention. It was viewed as a location to hang out with their friends, an avenue to get assistance, and a place to feel safe. In addition, the center’s staff was perceived as “welcoming, nurturing, accountable, and reliable.”
All students reported the benefits of the cross-cultural center to their student communities; however, an issue with the center was its remote campus location. Facilities were perceived as limited, and expansion was seen as a necessity. Students also expressed the desire to have the center in a more visible location on campus similar to the student union or the bookstore. Furthermore, they noted the value of having a cross-cultural center at the heart of campus to educate the university community about diversity.

A final complaint focused on the lack of resources for diversity initiatives on campus. In particular, they highlighted the need to present justification for the existence of the cross-cultural center, programs, and events raised major concerns. Moreover, they made reference to the copious amount of money allocated for intercollegiate sports (e.g., such as the football team) and the limited funding provided to the center or diversity initiatives. A specific example included when the Asian student focus group identified an 80% budget cut for a campuswide program addressing diversity, leaving a total of $300 for the entire academic year. They highlighted that the football coach was making more than a million dollars, and minimal efforts were being invested to keep a program that educated staff, faculty, and students about White privilege, discrimination, gender discrimination, and other inequalities.

Departmental units. The academic departments received both positive and negative evaluations. Some faculty were perceived as supportive and willing to assist the students, whereas others reported stereotypes and “different” expectations. Specifically, some faculty members were known to provide extra time and individual attention if one visited them during office hours. On the other hand, some students reported that there were instances where faculty made multiculturally insensitive comments and students became offended. An example was a Native American student sitting in class hearing his professor ask, “How many of you played Indian this weekend?” The faculty was referring to “cowboys and Indians as a minimal incident and a credible part of history.” The student reported this experience as offensive and dismissive. In other instances, students felt the expectation of having to know “all about their culture” and being viewed as “experts in their culture.” They were called on in class to discuss “What Latinos think . . . or to simply provide the minority perspective.” This was reported as “isolating and tokenism.”

Compounding the experience, most of the groups felt the academic units and other units across campus held the cross-cultural center responsible for diversity programs and not themselves. Specifically, university services were reported to “push students of color away” and “get them out.” The personnel from the administration building was perceived as a group that redirected the students to the cross-cultural center or addressed the issues immediately to minimize their encounter with the student. Last, many of the students reported not knowing about many of the programs or services
available on campus. To promote programs and services, the students expressed the need to better advertise on-campus resources.

**Student recommendations.** To complement the data on the students’ experiences and the quality of student services, time was allotted for the students to provide the institution direction on methods to better assist them with their academic and social needs. Some student recommendations were not too surprising and aligned with the research, whereas others were innovative and added to the cited literature. Specifically, students requested the recruitment of more students of color, faculty, and staff of color and the retention of their peers. Moreover, students requested a strong mentoring program with an adequate mentor to mentee ratio, highlighting the ineffectiveness of several mentees to one faculty mentor. Less common recommendations included more representation of the cross-cultural center during orientation week, programs reinforcing a multicultural coalition where all student groups work collaboratively and not separately, the development of a multicultural yearbook, and the establishment of a cultural library to learn about their own history and country. Other recommendations included educational programs designed to assist students in their academic transition (i.e., tutoring), study groups, a more central location on campus for the cross-cultural center, and the playing of more ethnic movies on campus. Student focus groups created to discuss personal and academic problems and the increase of family involvement on campus were also identified as important for their undergraduate experience. More ethnic-specific recommendations included a sweat house for Native Americans, more money for powwows, and the need to embrace community leaders with invitations to campus, creating an opportunity for the Native American tribe leaders to talk to the university president and set goals for Native American students’ retention.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are a number of limitations inherent in the study due to its design. First, the ethnic minority voices in this study represent only the perceptions of ethnic minority students at one PWI. Second, the generalizability of the results are limited, although the selected research university could be representative of other PWIs. Hence, there is a need to further examine this phenomenon in other similar institutions. In addition, the data concentrate on ethnic minority students who visited the center and chose to participate and not ethnic minority students who were not active in the cultural center. Last, due to the fact that the cultural center was used as the primary location for collecting data, the findings and pool of participants are limited.
Conclusions and Implications

The proposed study has three implications; they are of theoretical, substantive, and practical significance. Theoretically, student involvement in relation to student service organizations provides a measure of institutional climate (Hurtado et al., 1998). In particular, quality cocurricular experiences assist students in developing personally and academically, adjusting to the environment, and affiliating positively with the institution. Yet if student service organizations are ethnically divided without significant interethnic and intraethnic group collaboration, students’ involvement is also likely to be segregated or at least strained by overburdened individuals who feel obligated to make the campus more amenable for other students of color. As a result, perceptions on institutional climate and student subjective sense of integration (Hurtado & Carter, 1997) are negative or at best a celebration of mainstream identity in which diversity is excluded.

Substantively, the study analyzes students’ experiences and perspectives about cross-cultural centers as institutional support systems, indicators of institutional climate, and pivotal connections between the campus environment and students’ subjective sense of integration. Reiterated throughout student responses was the significance of ethnic centers, either in their own ethnic identity development or in the institutions’ diversity efforts. A large portion of students expressed support for the role of the cross-cultural center in the reaffirmation of their identity and in understanding their ancestral pasts and struggles. Interestingly, however, all groups reported the limited effort of uniting as a cohesive group to examine ethnic minority issues as a community. An emerging role of the center is influenced by biracial students with lighter skin color or who did not phenotypically match their ethnic backgrounds and who also report not feeling embraced by their own ethnic groups. Hence, cultural centers demonstrate a reinforcement of identity for some students and a disenfranchisement for others who are perhaps biracial or multiethnic.

Communal collaboration was deemed significant not only among the ethnic centers and their student groups but between the centers and other student service departments across campus. Interestingly, the lack of resources for diversity efforts and collaboration between the cross-cultural center and campuswide services led students to perceive the ethnic centers as the only place were diversity issues were important. Subsequently, the work of the ethnic centers was perceived as being unimportant and trivial to campuswide operations. Students’ perceptions and consistent interpretations of ethnic centers were then interpreted within the context of other alienating and isolating experiences, reinforcing that ethnic minority students’ needs, identity development, and culture were not integrated nor celebrated throughout
the campus. Supporting Sedlacek (1996) and Steward and Germain (1992), this lack of inclusion and reported marginalization reflected in their perceptions, in turn, affected the students’ subjective sense of limited integration.

The practical significance of this study may help practitioners better understand ethnic minority undergraduate experiences at a PWI and the role of a cross-cultural center on students’ adaptation to the university. It provides insight on the students’ views and helps student affairs administrators better direct the academy’s mission and effort toward a more inclusive and culturally sensitive environment as correlated with student expectations. The findings supported racial differences in the social educational experiences of students at postsecondary institutions. Results further suggested that the experiences of students of color at PWIs are improving but are still not at their optimal developmental state (Bennett, 1995; Loeb & Magee, 1992; Turner, 1994). The study supports the existence of a more diversity-tolerant academy while also highlighting the continued prevalence of insensitive administrators, faculty, and students who do not recognize the role of culture in the academy or the importance to their celebration of diversity (Valverde & Castenell, 1998).

Some students continue to hold prejudices against ethnic minority cultures, and these attitudes affect ethnic minority students’ experiences, creating a sense of isolation and alienation (Calabrese & Poe, 1990). It was, however, evident that the existence of the cross-cultural center enhanced the students’ undergraduate experience at a PWI and created a location to gain support and guidance. Students, unanimously, felt that the cross-cultural center serves as an instrumental vehicle to retention and student satisfaction beyond many of the campuswide services (Turner, 1994).

**Future Directions**

**Research.** The following research areas are considered for future directions: research methodology and inquiry, examination of campus cross-cultural centers, and multicultural initiatives across postsecondary institutions. First, given the plethora of quantitative research on the ethnic minority experience, more qualitative research is needed. Perhaps a complimentary style of research, using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, would provide a more comprehensive view of the ethnic minority experience at PWIs. Second, beyond that of fraternity and sorority organizations, a dismal amount of literature addresses the current role of campus cross-cultural centers and ethnic specific organizations. Has the role of campus cross-cultural centers changed over the past 30 years, particularly during this era of cultural transformation? Is there a movement or need to consolidate ethnic-specific cultural centers into one campus cross-cultural center? Undoubtedly, further examinations of campus cross-cultural centers are necessary across postsecondary institutions. Last, comprehensive research providing a
summary of successful multicultural initiatives implemented in predominantly White research institutions and to what extent student service organizations collaborate with these initiatives would be of significant value across higher education institutions. Moreover, an examination of current trends in implementing such programs would be valuable in and of itself. Perhaps cultural competency standards could be created, similar to that of moral/ethnic practices, that provide guidelines for student affairs implementation of minimal standards for developing multiculturalism on today’s college campus. Furthermore, an accreditation, endorsed by national student affairs organizations, could be provided for institutions that wish to join.

Practice. A number of implications for practice are suggested by the results of this study and supported by the literature. First, there is a need for higher education representatives to acknowledge, regard, and support the resources that contribute to the undergraduate experience and retention, specifically for ethnic minority student populations (Sedlacek, 1987). Administrators must recognize the role of cultural centers and ethnic-specific clubs and organizations for students of color at PWIs. A university-wide strategy should be endorsed for the entire institution, and money should be invested to carry out the recommendations. Second, student affairs administrators should consider the multiple social experiences and their respective gains in the implementation of mentoring programs, retention of faculty of color, diversity education, and coeducational assistance services (Rendon, 1996). Specifically, it is critical to recognize the vital function of having role models for ethnic minority students. Moreover, the tutoring can have an indelible impact on first-generation college students. And the value of a culturally relevant education is an important investment for the ethnic minority student and his or her educational and personal progress.

Third, higher education representatives must fulfill the responsibility to make available campuswide involvement opportunities to educate the university constituents about diverse student populations. For example, it is essential that practitioners implement programs that promote the understanding and sensitivity toward the examined groups and meet their needs. In particular, dialogue-type programs that address cultural differences, unequal opportunities, racism, and oppression in a constructive manner spark critical thinking and create a more conducive environment that attends to ethnic minority issues and promotes change. Fourth, it is crucial that all entities in the university acknowledge that negative and culturally insensitive attitudes and behaviors affect all incumbents in the university and affect the students’ academic performance, satisfaction, and retention. Specifically, faculty members should assess their interactions in the classroom and monitor their delivery and cultural sensitivity while not minimizing the role of presenting curriculum and a learning experience. Furthermore, they should be held accountable for their actions in the classroom, and faculty promotion guide-
lines should include evaluation based on not only knowledge of their area of expertise but cultural sensitivity and multicultural competency.

In conclusion, university administrators, staff, faculty, and students need to collaborate to understand the needs and expectations of their students of color. University administrators must implement and encourage a team effort for all constituents from all levels of the university to take active responsibility for enhancing the experience of ethnic minorities and their retention. In addition, students of color should not work independently in their efforts toward retention. Instead, opportunities for students, faculty, and university administrators to discuss a common effort should be provided. There should be annual forums for faculty, staff, and students to assess the experiences of students of color and their academic progress, concerns, needs, and recommendations to the university. Action plans should be formulated from these gatherings, and strategic follow-up should be implemented to evaluate progress.

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Latinos in Higher Education: An Evaluation of a University Faculty Mentoring Program

SILVIA J. SANTOS AND ELENA T. REIGADAS

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to understand the student-faculty mentoring process and how mentoring facilitates Latino students’ adjustment to college. Thirty-two Latino students participating in a university Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP) were surveyed. The findings showed that (a) students experienced an increase in college self-efficacy and academic goal definition as a result of participating in the FMP; (b) students with same-ethnic mentors perceived them to be significantly more supportive in furthering their personal and career development and reported significantly greater program satisfaction than nonmatched students; and (c) frequency of student-mentor contact was positively correlated with students’ adjustment to college, perceived mentor supportiveness, and program satisfaction.

Resumen: El propósito de este estudio fue el entender el proceso de guía o apoyo entre estudiante y profesor; y como dicha guía facilita la adaptación a la universidad de estudiantes Latinos. Treinta y dos estudiantes Latinos que participaron en un Programa con Profesores Guías (FMP) fueron investigados. Los resultados demuestran: (a) como resultado de la participación en el FMP los estudiantes experimentaron un incremento en autoeficacia en la universidad, así como la definición de metas académicas; (b) estudiantes asignados a profesores guías del mismo grupo étnico percibieron a sus guías con mayor capacidad de brindarles apoyo para su desarrollo personal y académico, y reportaron más satisfacción en el programa que los estudiantes que tuvieron guías de grupo étnico diferente; y (c) la frecuencia de contacto entre el estudiante y el mentor se correlacionó positivamente con el ajuste o adaptación de los estudiantes al medio universitario, la percepción de apoyo y la satisfacción en el programa.

Latino student retention and graduation at 4-year institutions continues to be a major concern among college and university officials. Several programs have been implemented at colleges and universities throughout California to

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improve the retention and graduation of at-risk ethnic minority students such as Latinos. To this end, California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) implemented the Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP) in January 1987 to serve its highly diverse student body. This report focuses specifically on the effectiveness of CSUDH’s FMP in facilitating Latino students’ adjustment to college.

Latinos compose one of the largest ethnic minority groups in this nation and have also been identified as the most undereducated group in the country (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1996; Minorities in Higher Education, 1999-2000, 2000). The growing number of undereducated Latino youth poses an enormous cost to this population and to society as a whole. Solorzano (1995) contended that the inadequate educational preparation of Latinos at the precollege level has already resulted in an immeasurable talent loss to society. For Latinos, it represents a loss of much needed role models for the next generation of Latino youths that aspire to a college education. Because education is the most important determinant of economic success later in life, university programs that actively seek to enhance the academic performance of Latino students should be carefully evaluated to understand fully how effectively these programs promote academic success in at-risk students.

Most mentoring relationships develop naturally. However, different organizations, including universities, are sponsoring “planned” mentoring relationships to enhance the opportunities of individuals who are less likely to have an informal mentor, such as women and ethnic minorities (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Nieva & Gutek, 1981; Thile & Matt, 1995). It is believed that planned mentoring programs may be a productive way of addressing the college adjustment needs of Latino students. Specifically, a relationship with a mentor may expand the student’s awareness of resources available for coping successfully with demanding academic conditions and, by implication, his or her sense of personal competence and self-efficacy.

The functions of the mentoring process are perhaps best understood within a social network theory (SNT) perspective (Thompson, 1995). SNT posits that resource mobilization, upward mobility, and social adaptation are more common among those whose social networks are large and diverse, as opposed to small and undiversified (Zippay, 1995). An acquaintance that has bridging ties to different social environments may facilitate access to resources not readily available from a person’s extant network. For at-risk students, faculty mentors serve as role models and offer information and contacts that mentees may not have available in their own social milieu. Furthermore, by developing a close relationship with their mentees, mentors provide emotional support.

In SNT terms, valence refers to the perceived emotional quality of relationships with network members (Thompson, 1995). Close ties to an infor-
nal mentor have been found to promote a positive sense of identity and emotional security in individuals (Garmezy, 1985; Rutter, 1987; Zippay, 1995). Similarly, a quality faculty-student mentoring relationship is likely to engender positive self-perceptions in at-risk students as well as feelings of self-efficacy, personal control, respect for oneself, and a sense of being valued and respected by significant others. Once students perceive they are capable of succeeding, the mentoring relationship may facilitate students’ persistence in college by promoting high academic aspirations and a strong focus on educational goals and a future career. According to Tinto (1987), students’ level of commitment to their academic goals is a strong predictor of the likelihood that they will remain in school.

Frequency of contact has been identified as an important and positive property of the mentor-mentee relationship. Levin and Levin (1991) noted that “the number, the kind and the quality of student interaction bears heavily on both academic success and social satisfaction” (p. 325). Likewise, DuBois and Neville (1997) found that the length of the relationship and average monthly contact accounted for 63% of the variance in ratings of perceived benefits from the mentor-mentee relationship. This research is consistent with the literature on SNT (Thompson, 1995) in which social embeddedness, defined as frequency of contact with network members, “potentially integrates individuals into a supportive community” (p. 46).

Another affiliative dimension of the mentor-mentee relationship is homogeneity; this refers to the extent that network members share common attributes such as occupational goals, religious values, and cultural background (Thompson, 1995). When mentors and mentees share common viewpoints through similar ethnic or cultural backgrounds, homogeneity may enhance supportiveness. That is, congruence in values, norms, and expectations is believed to foster emotional and instrumental aid (Thompson, 1995). Research by Atkinsons, Casas, and Neville (1994) supports this contention. They found that participants who mentored ethnically similar students viewed the relationship more positively than did those who mentored ethnic-other students.

Most available information on the effects of formal mentoring programs in higher education has focused primarily on educational outcomes such as persistence rates, graduate rates, and grade point average (e.g., Levin & Levin, 1991; Thile & Matt, 1995). This line of research has resulted in conflicting findings regarding the effectiveness of formal mentoring programs (e.g., Granger, 1995; Roberts & Cotton, 1994; Thile & Matt, 1995). Thus, the purpose of this study was to understand how the mentoring process facilitates the personal and social adaptation of Latino students to college through an evaluation of a university FMP. The following hypotheses regarding the mentoring process are framed within an SNT perspective.
Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: In line with SNT (Thompson, 1995), it was expected that Latino students would experience an increase in perceived college adjustment as a function of participating in the FMP. Specifically, FMP students were expected to report higher levels of college self-efficacy and greater concern about succeeding in college and have better defined academic goals after joining the FMP than before participating in the program.

Hypothesis 2: Consistent with the SNT (Thompson, 1995) notion of homogeneity among network members, it was hypothesized that FMP students who had same-ethnic mentors would report higher levels of college self-efficacy and greater concern about succeeding in college and have better defined academic goals than FMP students who had mentors of a different ethnic background. Furthermore, it was expected that Latino students who were ethnically matched to mentors would perceive their mentors as affording them with greater personal and career development than nonmatched students. Likewise, ethnically matched students were expected to report greater satisfaction with the FMP than their nonmatched counterparts.

Hypothesis 3: Finally, social embeddedness (Thompson, 1995), defined as frequency of mentor-mentee contact, was expected to positively influence students’ college adjustment and the perceived benefits received from the mentor-mentee relationship in terms of personal and career development. Accordingly, frequent student-mentor contact was expected to positively predict students’ level of satisfaction with the FMP.

Method

Program Description

The FMP at CSUDH provides those students who had been defined as at risk (i.e., ethnic minority students and older adults) with faculty mentors. The goal of the FMP is to encourage faculty-student interaction through a mentoring relationship that will lead to improved student academic achievement, retention, and graduation and a better understanding by faculty of at-risk students. Potential mentees are mailed FMP brochures and invited to participate in the program. Students ultimately decide if they want to participate. Mentors are selected from faculty members who express a desire to work with students in a mentoring capacity.

Participants

A survey was mailed to students who were participants of the CSUDH’s FMP with the stated purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of this university program. A total of 65 students responded to the survey, of which 49% were Latino, 28% were African American, 14% were European American, and 8% were other. Only the data pertaining to Latino students (n = 32) will be discussed in this report.
The Latino sample consisted of 75% female and 25% male students, ranging in age from 18 to 36 years. The majorities of students were born in the United States (90.6%) and were the first in their families to attend college (71.9%). Approximately half of the mentees had been involved in FMP for at least 1 year (46.9%) at the time of the study. The majority of students joined the FMP during their freshman (34.4%) and sophomore (31.3%) year in college, with fewer students (25%) seeking mentors in their junior and senior year. In terms of ethnic similarity, 43.8% of the mentees had a Latino faculty mentor, and 53.6% were assigned mentors of a different ethnicity (i.e., African American or European American). Furthermore, the majority of Latino students (81%) were matched to a faculty mentor of the same gender. Finally, although only 25% of students had mentors within their same academic major, most students (53%) met with their faculty mentors on a regular basis (three to four times per month). Table 1 provides more information about the demographic characteristics of Latino students.

Measures

The FMP survey is a two-part instrument designed to tap into mentees’ perceived adjustment to college and their perception of faculty mentors and the program itself.
College adjustment measures. Three attitudinal indicators were used to assess the students’ perceived adjustment to college. Specifically, students were asked to think retrospectively about how they felt before entering the FMP and while participating in the FMP on the following dimensions:

1. College anxiety was measured by a three-item scale that tapped into mentees’ level of concern about performing well in college and meeting their academic obligations. Items were answered on a 4-point scale ranging from not anxious to very anxious.
2. College self-efficacy was measured by a three-item scale that assessed students’ perception of how likely it was that they would succeed academically in college and establish social ties within the university. Items were answered on a 4-point scale ranging from not very successful to very successful.
3. College goal definition was measured by a one-item scale that measured how well defined students’ academic goals were on a 4-point scale ranging from not defined at all to very well defined.

Perceptions of faculty mentors and the FMP program. A modified version of Granger’s (1995) 20-item Faculty Mentor Perception Scale was used to examine the extent and type of support given by mentors to mentees in various areas. All items were answered on 5-point rating scales ranging from very helpful to not very helpful. A principal component factor analysis with an oblique rotation was conducted on this measure using the entire sample (N = 65). This analysis yielded two interpretable factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 and item-loadings on each factor ranging from .40 to .80. This solution also produced factors with good reliability.

1. Career development (alpha = .95) was measured by a six-item scale that assessed the level of support provided by mentors in terms of helping mentees achieve their educational goals. Example, of career development items include the following: The mentor was helpful/not helpful in “connecting you with key people,” “focusing on graduate school,” and “reaching your career goals.”
2. Personal development (alpha = .93) was measured by an eight-item scale that assessed the level of psychosocial support provided by mentors. Sample items include the following: The mentor was helpful/not helpful in “being a role model,” “adjusting to college,” “establishing social ties,” “developing relations with faculty,” “handling personal issues,” and “reaching out to offer help.”

Finally, a gross index of students’ overall satisfaction with the FMP was assessed using a single-item, 4-point rating scale ranging from very satisfied to very dissatisfied.
Results and Discussion

Hypothesis 1. Pair-wise comparison of mean t tests were used to assess the hypothesis that students’ adjustment to college would improve as a function of participating in the FMP. The results of these analyses provided strong support for this hypothesis. The t-test analyses (see Table 2) revealed that Latino students experienced an increase in college self-efficacy and had better defined academic goals after joining the FMP than before participating in the program. However, no mean changes were observed on the college anxiety measure prior to joining the FMP and while participating in the program. This suggests that students remained concerned about their academic performance while participating in the FMP but then benefited from having clearer defined academic goals and greater self-efficacy in their ability to succeed in college. Hence, the emotional quality or valence afforded by the student-mentor relationship appeared to foster a more positive student identity among Latino mentees—internal qualities believed to be critical to college persistence (Terenzini et al., 1994). These findings are in line with prior research conducted by Harris and Brewer (1986), who noted that faculty mentoring enhanced the personal, intellectual, and professional growth of student teachers in psychology.

Hypothesis 2. To examine the role that student-mentor ethnic homogeneity plays in the mentoring process, a number of independent t-test analyses were conducted on the college adjustment measures, the mentor support measures, and the FMP satisfaction measure. In line with SNT (see Table 3), the results revealed that students who had same-ethnic mentors perceived their mentors to be more helpful in furthering their career and personal development than did students who had ethnic-other mentors. Furthermore, there was a significant trend for students with matched ethnic mentors to perceive themselves as being more self-efficacious academically than did the non-matched students. Finally, students with matched ethnic mentors reported greater satisfaction with the FMP than did their nonmatched counterparts.

Based on these findings, it is clear that homogeneity in cultural background was an important affiliative dimension of the mentor-mentee rela-

Table 2
Mean Differences on College Adjustment Measures Before Entering the Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP) and While Participating in the FMP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Before FMP</th>
<th>During FMP</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College anxiety</td>
<td>8.48</td>
<td>8.93</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>7.78</td>
<td>8.91</td>
<td>3.30**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal definition</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.52****</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .05. ****p < .005.
Considering that 72% of the mentees were the first in their families to attend college, having a mentor of their same ethnic background may have been especially important to mentees’ personal growth as university students. It can be argued that a Latino mentor was a more salient and identifiable role model for mentees, where similarities in values, expectations, and background enhanced the perceived supportiveness and benefits of the relationship. This finding adds to prior research conducted by Atkinson et al. (1994) regarding mentors’ perceptions of their relationship with mentees. They found in the case of mentors that they, too, tended to attach greater value to relationships with same-ethnic students than with ethnic-other mentees.

The importance of ethnic homogeneity in the mentor-mentee relationship has important implications for student retention of Latinos and other at-risk students. It upholds current efforts by some institutions to increase the representation of ethnic minority faculty in academia to better match the composition of the student body. As noted by Thile and Matt (1995), “unless academic institutions are able to promote a continual support system of role models and mentors, students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds are significantly less likely to sustain the motivation and belief system necessary for academic success” (p. 118).

Hypothesis 3. Pearson product-moment correlations were used to test the hypothesis that frequency of student-mentor contact would positively influence the mentoring process. Consistent with the SNT notion of social embeddedness, frequency of contact with faculty mentors was positively associated with Latinos’ adjustment to college (see Table 4). Greater frequency of contact between students and mentors was associated with higher levels of perceived college self-efficacy in students, better defined academic goals, and a higher level of concern to perform well and meet academic obligations. As noted previously, these attitudinal values have been linked to student retention in higher education (Terenzini, 1994; Tinto, 1987). Also

**Table 3**
Mean Differences on Measures of Student College Adjustment, Faculty Mentor Support, and Faculty Mentoring Program Satisfaction by Student-Mentor Ethnic Homogeneity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Student-Mentor Ethnicity</th>
<th>Not Matched</th>
<th>Matched</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.39</td>
<td>9.70</td>
<td>–1.59*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.72</td>
<td>9.14</td>
<td>–.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal definition</td>
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<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.88</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>–1.71***</td>
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*p < .07, **p < .05, ***p < .01.
consistent with SNT, frequency of student-mentor contact was positively related to mentors’ perceived helpfulness in furthering students’ career and personal development. Hence, faculty mentors appeared to facilitate students’ personal and academic adaptation to college by affording them with emotional support and resources (i.e., contacts and information) otherwise not readily available to these mentees. Finally, greater student-mentor contact was associated with satisfaction with the FMP.

Student-faculty interaction or social embeddedness within the university social system is believed to be the most critical factor of college persistence (Thile & Matt, 1995; Volkwein, King, & Terenzini, 1986). The above findings support this contention and point to frequency of student-faculty contact as the most important determinant of Latino students’ personal and social adjustment to college. In the case of Latino students, this type of one-on-one interaction with university faculty mentors may be especially important given they have few role models or natural mentors from the home community to guide them in the journey towards academic achievement.

### Conclusion and Limitations

Working from an SNT perspective, the findings of this study add to existing outcome research by focusing on understanding the mentoring process as it applies to Latino university students participating in an FMP. Overall, this investigation illustrated how mentors facilitated Latino students’ personal and social adjustment to college by providing emotional support and access to resources and information. Furthermore, it identified students’ level of social embeddedness and ethnic homogeneity in student-mentor backgrounds as important factors influencing the quality of the mentoring process and overall satisfaction with the FMP.

On a cautionary note, the findings of this evaluation are based on a cross-sectional design. Mentoring, however, is a process that would be better assessed through the use of longitudinal methods. Furthermore, this

### Table 4

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<td>.08</td>
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<td>.344**</td>
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**p < .05, ***p < .01.
study relied on self-report as well as retrospective data; thus, the results reflect students’ perception of events that may be inaccurate or biased. Likewise, the sample was relatively small, and Latino students who participated in this evaluation may differ in important ways from other Latinos who chose not to participate. Despite these limitations, the applied significance of this evaluation is enhanced by the fact that it is a theoretically driven project based on prior qualitative research (Reigadas & Santos, in press).

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Increasing Mexican American Doctoral Degrees: The Role of Institutions of Higher Education

MICHELLE R. VALVERDE AND ROY C. RODRIGUEZ

Abstract: Mexican Americans continue to be severely underrepresented among doctoral degree recipients. Although much more research is warranted on this topic, the institutional support model presented can serve to provide immediate guidance to personnel in institutions of higher education who want to increase the rates of Mexican American doctoral degree attainment. The model was developed based on a retrospective analysis of the authors’ experiences as participants at one of the host institutions in the Hispanic Border Leadership Institute Doctoral Fellowship Program and a review of the literature. The four components of the model include financial support and opportunity, emotional/moral support, mentorship from university faculty or other professionals, and technical support.

Resumen: Individuos México-Americanos continúan siendo poblemente representados entre aquellos que reciben título doctoral. Aunque es necesario continuar investigando este tópico, el Modelo de Apoyo Institucional que se presenta puede servir para dar guía inmediata al personal en instituciones de educación superior que quieren incrementar la tasa de obtención de grado doctoral de México-Americanos. El modelo fue desarrollado basado en el análisis retrospectivo de las experiencias de los autores como participantes en una de las instituciones del Instituto de Liderazgo de la Frontera Hispana del Programa Doctoral, así como la revisión de la literatura. Los cuatro componentes del modelo incluyen apoyo y oportunidad económica; apoyo emocional y moral; consejo o guía de profesores y otros profesionales en la universidad; y apoyo técnico.

Hispanics in general and subpopulation of Mexican Americans in particular continue to be underrepresented among those who obtain postsecondary degrees in the United States. In fact, no major change has occurred in Hispanic graduate enrollments or degrees awarded since 1976 (Olivas, 1997). The severity of underrepresentation is most evident at the doctoral level, where only 2% of all doctoral degrees attained in 1996 were awarded to Hispanics (President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence of Hispanic Americans, 2000). Given the limitations of the data available, it is difficult to determine what proportion of these degrees awarded nationwide...
were to Mexican Americans. What is known, however, is that all Hispanics combined accounted for 11% of the general population during the same year (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2000).

In response to the underrepresentation of Hispanics with doctorate degrees and as part of a larger initiative aimed at improving the educational system overall, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation funded the Hispanic Border Leadership Institute (HBLI) in 1996. As part of the HBLI program, four major universities in the states on the U.S.-Mexico border were provided funding to extend fellowships to 30 Hispanics to complete the doctorate in educational administration. Three consecutive cohorts of students entered the program beginning in 1997, with the vast majority being of Mexican ancestry.

The institutional support model presented was developed based on a retrospective analysis of the authors’ experiences as participants in the first cohort at one of the host institutions in the HBLI Doctoral Fellowship Program and a review of the literature. The model captures a systematic process composed of four critical elements related to financial assistance, emotional/moral support, mentorship, and technical support that together contributed to the completion of eight out of nine HBLI fellows from the first cohort.

Although the importance of the majority of the elements has been documented by previous researchers, especially in relationship to minority doctoral student success (Adams, 1992; Tinto, 1993; Williamson, 1994), the emphasis on Mexican American students specifically is limited. The hope is that this model serves to stimulate further research in this area while guiding personnel in institutions of higher education in the interim. The model is by no means a final product but is rather a starting point that can be modified and updated as the results of future research warrant.

**Doctoral Degree Attainment**

Not unlike doctoral students in every program in the country, Mexican American doctoral students generally enter their programs with differing interests, strengths, and personal responsibilities that eventually affect their success. For institutions of higher education seeking to increase Mexican American doctoral completion rates, these personal or internal factors are not easy to target. In contrast to personal differences, the support system that lies within the academic arena can be shaped positively by institutions of higher education to effectively facilitate degree completion.

When addressing the support system within the academic arena, Mexican American doctoral students need much of the same elements of support that White doctoral students have received. Oftentimes, White doctoral students come from families where advanced degrees were anticipated and present. Mexican American students, on the other hand, usually do not have this history. In addition, the vast majority of university faculty are White
(Flores, 2000) and, for the most part, do not serve as cultural role models for Mexican American doctoral students.

In the area of financial support, a larger proportion of White students in general are from middle- to upper-income families. Although they may still be in need of grants and loans, a greater potential for family financial support exists. In contrast, Mexican American doctoral students are, more frequently, from lower-income families. A number of these families are the first generation in the United States. Furthermore, many Mexican American doctoral students are the first in their families to graduate from a university and are the first among their extended family to obtain postgraduate degrees.

**The Institutional Support Model**

The model presented in Figure 1 takes into account the cultural, economic, and educational history of most Mexican American students that live and work on the U.S.-Mexican border. The model is composed of four elements that addressed as a unit can increase the completion rates of Mexican American students in any university doctoral program. The four elements of the model are financial support and opportunity, emotional/moral support from numerous sources, mentorship from university faculty or other significant individuals in the profession, and technical support from a variety of sources. Each of these elements is discussed in detail below.
Financial Support

Financial support has traditionally been targeted to undergraduate students mainly in the form of federally financed grants, work-study programs, scholarships, and loans, with the emphasis currently being on loans (Peterson, Dill, Mets, & Associates, 1997). For doctoral students, financial aid is usually acquired in the form of loans, research/teaching assistantships, and/or fellowships and the amount of the aid varies considerably.

Financial support is critical for all doctoral students because it allows them to leave full-time positions and focus on a program of studies. However, it is especially critical for Mexican American students, as Gandara (1994) discovered in her study of 50 Mexican Americans from low-income backgrounds who had earned advanced degrees. Approximately half of those studied cited financial aid as a key factor in their decision to pursue higher education.

In the HBLI program, an annual fellowship of $15,000 was awarded to each of the selected doctoral students for a period of 3 years. In addition, the four border universities participating in this program awarded each of the fellows some form of teaching or research assistantship (the amounts differed at each university). The intent of these funds was to provide a living wage for each of the fellows, most of whom had already established a professional career path. In general, it is very difficult for Mexican Americans to step out of their professional responsibilities for 2 or 3 years in order to obtain a doctorate.

Most of the fellows came from university, community college, or public school settings, and for the majority, the professional positions they held were the most prestigious and highest ranking in their families. It is particularly difficult for Mexican Americans to explain to family and friends that they are going to leave jobs and return to college. Providing credible financial assistance makes these transitions much more acceptable and possible.

Emotional And Moral Support

Mexican Americans as a group are frequently highly committed to their home communities or regions. These cultural characteristics have long roots among Mexican Americans along the U.S.-Mexico border. Many universities view this commitment to the home community as a weakness of Mexican American students. What they fail to realize is that a long history of discrimination and hostility has forced Mexican Americans to maintain close ties to family, traditions, language, culture, and community.

The four border universities that comprise the HBLI program have used these characteristics as a strength. To provide the emotional and moral support needed by the fellows, a number of conditions and situations were established. First, the students were brought to the doctoral program as a cohort. Because the students were in the program as a critical mass, they provided support to each other. Friendships and bonds were formulated.
Second, numerous cultural and social activities were planned for the fellows. Because the four participating universities are in border communities, the cultural ties have been easy to maintain. Third, numerous visits to universities, community colleges, and public schools along the border and into Mexico were taken by the fellows.

Another significant factor that worked into the formula pertaining to individual bonds created with faculty and staff was that most, but not all, were Mexican American themselves. The accompanying emotional support received through these connections played a vital role in the persistence of the HBLI doctoral students as it has for other Mexican American and American Indian doctoral students (Williamson, 1994). If existing staff and faculty cannot develop these kinds of relationships with the students, it makes sense to hire staff and/or faculty who can.

**Mentorship**

The third element of the model that contributed to the success of the Mexican American students in the HBLI program was mentorship. Mentors are usually matched with doctoral students because of similar research interests (this is particularly critical in the sciences). Adams (1992), Tinto (1990), and Williamson (1994) have all addressed the critical role played by mentors in the doctoral process.

Mexican American doctoral students in science, engineering, agriculture, the arts, and business have a difficult time finding mentors that hold their research interests and understand their background. In the social science and education fields, the task is not as difficult because faculty exist that not only come from the same cultural history as the students but oftentimes have similar research interests.

In the HBLI program, the Mexican American doctoral students worked with a Mexican American doctoral chair who, for the most part, was also each student’s mentor. When a Mexican American faculty member was not available to chair the dissertation, then one would serve as an unofficial mentor. Having a mentor with the same cultural background seemed to have a positive effect on the HBLI students, which supports the findings of Williamson (1994).

An effective mentor or chair employs several strategies to facilitate the completion of the degree. First, working closely with the students to ensure that the program of studies is appropriate and adequate is important. Second, providing the students with an outline of the steps that need to be completed before beginning the dissertation process is another helpful component. Third, meeting with the students regularly and providing tips on how to effectively prepare for the written and oral examinations is essential. During the entire dissertation process, it is important for the mentor/chair to frequently communicate with the students, problem solve, and stress the need to proceed forward.
Technical Support

The final component of the model is technical assistance. Technical assistance is a large and amorphous concept. Although it has not emerged repeatedly in previous studies as an important contributor for doctoral completion, it is an element worthy of being examined in future research. In any given doctoral program, technical assistance may include research design and statistics, computer usage, laboratory availability, equipment availability, and even internships or field experiences. If these issues are not addressed effectively, they can become obstacles that are difficult to overcome.

The HBLI faculty and staff members were very aware of these potential barriers. For the fellows in the program, research design and statistics were the primary challenges. To minimize these barriers as much as possible, seminars and one-on-one sessions on research design and survey research were conducted. In the area of statistical assistance, a consultant was hired specifically to advise and direct the fellows in their data analysis and interpretation.

Discussion and Conclusions

The educational attainment of Mexican Americans continues to be a very important issue in the United States. Increasing Mexican American doctoral completion rates should not be as illusive as it has been, because the support elements these students require are similar to those that White doctoral students have received for many years. What is different about the institutional support model is that it encourages personnel within institutions of higher education to look critically at how to formalize support mechanisms for Mexican American students that may or may not exist otherwise.

Another very important point is that although these four components themselves appear to be key in promoting Mexican American doctoral student completion, they are not sufficient in and of themselves. It is the qualitative aspect of how the supportive elements are delivered that truly makes a difference. In the case of the HBLI fellows who graduated in 2000, the outcome may have been very different if the specific individuals who provided the key supportive elements had not possessed high expectations for the fellows and a strong commitment for educational improvement for Mexican American doctoral students.

Similarly, the four border universities must be complimented on their commitment to the success of the participating doctoral students (one each in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas). The need for a commitment to establish conditions where Mexican American students will succeed in doctoral programs (and all postsecondary programs) cannot be overemphasized. Although a larger number of Mexican Americans are entering postgraduate programs, the number is still small compared to the Mexican
American population in border states. Every Mexican American doctoral student enrolled is a unique commodity, and universities can be more systematic in facilitating their success.

Several specific implications for program development can be extrapolated from the model presented. First, personnel within institutions of higher education can assess their own doctoral programs using this model as a guide. Once weaknesses are identified, aggressive steps need to be taken to formalize a process for developing elements that support doctoral completion for the targeted population group. The dissertation phase needs to be looked at carefully because it oftentimes presents greater challenges and increased isolation for students.

A second implication for program development is to employ experienced, knowledgeable, and dedicated individuals (both faculty members and program staff) committed to the success of Mexican American doctoral students. Retention efforts should ideally be looked at as overall institutional improvement. Tinto (1993) summarized this well in the statement that “successful retention is successful education.” In the case of the HBLI fellows, a number of the involved faculty and staff were highly experienced in supporting student completion, knowledgeable about retention issues, and extremely dedicated.

The third implication for program development is related to financial assistance. Universities in the United States must come to the realization that an increased critical mass of Mexican American scholars (in any postgraduate program) will only occur with the commitment of adequate financial assistance. A major factor leading to the success of the HBLI fellows has been the fellowship provided. In addition, the four participating universities awarded a teaching or research assistantship to each of the fellows. Mexican Americans continue to be overrepresented within the lower income bracket, and as such, it is completely unreasonable for universities to believe that they can recruit and retain Mexican American doctoral students without adequate financial assistance.

Finally, successful education begins with the assumption that all students have a right to achieve educational success. When faculty and staff hold high expectations for Mexican American students and themselves equally and provide an equitable opportunity, Mexican American students can and will complete the doctoral process.

References


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Experiential Analysis of a Multicultural Learning Adventure in a Hispanic-Serving Institution

ANNETTE E. CRAVEN AND JESSICA C. KIMMEL

Abstract: Two faculty members of a liberal arts, Catholic university use constructivist learning theory and Reuven Feuerstein’s concept of the mediated learning experience to create an environment of enculturation in an interdisciplinary philosophy course for doctoral students from multiple cultures. This article demonstrates how two female faculty members of Anglo descent translated the experience into the definition and development of thinking skills and meaning making for students in a Hispanic-serving institution from multiple cultures with diverse areas of professional expertise and very different personal philosophies.

Resumen: Dos profesoras usaron la teoría de aprendizaje constructivista y el concepto de Reuven Feuerstein de la experiencia de aprendizaje mediado para crear un medio ambiente de enculturación en una universidad Católica, en el curso de Filosofía interdisciplinaria, con estudiantes de culturas múltiples, y nivel de doctorado. Este artículo demuestra como dos profesoras de descendencia Anglo tradujeron esa experiencia en definición, desarrollo del pensamiento, y construcción de significado para los estudiantes en una institución que sirve a Hispanos de culturas múltiples, con habilidades diversas en áreas profesionales, y con filosofías personales diferentes.

The issue of globalization is seen daily in local and national media. What were once only national corporations have become multinational or transnational organizations. It is difficult now to imagine a time when there was a unilingual environment. Naturally, globalization spread beyond the confines of business, governmental, and scientific environments and into the academic environment, for how else could students be prepared to function globally in terms of the demanding and complex requirements of commerce, politics, and cooperative research? One approach is to focus on the enculturation of multiple cultures in the classroom, bringing the central issue of globalization—operating in and with new cultures—into the learning discussion.

There is no contradiction between the perpetuation of one’s native culture and attaining excellence in the new culture. (Feuerstein, 2001)
University of the Incarnate Word (UIW) is a small, Catholic, Hispanic-serving university nestled scenically in the heart of San Antonio, Texas. UIW was founded by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word in 1881; it began as a school serving the K-12 population and soon expanded its offerings to the college level to include bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Ultimately, in its emergence into a university, it received approval from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to offer a doctoral degree in Education with emphases in organizational leadership and mathematics education. One very challenging aspect of the doctoral studies is the international nature of its students: Hispanics, Chinese, Koreans, and Taiwanese. The Asian doctoral students have a diverse range of English literacy and initially enter campus life as a cohort. For the first two semesters, these students attend classes in their cohort structure.

This presented a challenge for the doctoral interdisciplinary studies course, which presents one of the initial opportunities to mix cultures. As suggested by Hofstede (Nahavandi, 2000), some of the major expected cultural differences we saw included group learning versus individual learning, uncertainty avoidance (the degree to which cultures tolerate ambiguity), masculinity (the degree to which the dominant cultural values focus on assertiveness, performance, and material success), and time orientation (the degree to which cultures are either long- or short-term oriented). In addition, we discovered differences in Eastern/Western teaching styles; Asian students are accustomed to a great deal of lecture. Their description of our teaching style was, “You teach with your whole body!”

In light of these disparities, our teaching strategy required modification and our cultural awareness increased. We became the participant observers in this phenomenological experience, and our problem statement became to create a multicultural, multilingual environment in which enculturation could take place and all doctoral students could address the issues of social science philosophy, economic theory, and personal responsibility. This translated into defining and developing thinking and meaning making for students from many different cultures, from diverse areas of professional expertise, and with very different personal philosophies. Success in combining these groups of students would provide strategies for faculty members to help future international cohorts to integrate more effectively and interact in a multicultural learning environment.

**Literature Review**

Constructivism is a learning theory that postulates that “individuals form or construct much of what they learn and understand” (Bruning, Schraw, & Ronning, 1995, as cited in Schunk, 1996, p. 208). Teachers using the constructivist strategy focus on the active involvement and social interaction of the learners. This is in contrast to the behaviorists who stress “the
influence of the environment on the person” and the cognitivists who “place the locus of learning within the mind with little attention to the context in which it occurs” (Schunk, 1996, p. 209). To emphasize the “creative process of inquiry that is contextually functional and culturally adaptive” (Kimmel, 1997, p. 16), instructional delivery should do more than transmit knowledge; it should create a transformational learning experience. Jack Mezirow (2000) described this type of learning as

the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of references (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. Transformative learning involves participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons justifying these assumptions, and making an action decision based on the resulting insight. (p. 8)

It was this learning for action, for understanding learning “to negotiate and act on our own values, feelings, needs, and meanings” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8) that we strove to develop in our class of many cultures. Transformational learning helps us explain the cognitive, social, and emotional changes that took place in our students. Proponents of the behaviorist and cognitive learning theories look only at a piece of the learning experience. We did not know what behaviors to expect or what cognitive development would take place, and we did not believe anyone outside the class could know what changes and understandings our students needed.

Critical to the creation of a multicultural, transformational learning experience is an understanding of the language, social, cultural, and philosophical needs of all students. Vygotsky

was critically aware of the importance of the social element in language construction and learning. He cited the need to establish in the classroom an environment of social cooperation and interaction of the learners, replacing the traditional communicative lines between teacher and learner. (as cited in Kimmel, 1997, p. 18)

Just as language construction applies to children who are learning to speak and expand their vocabulary, so too does it apply to international students who have to learn how to converse academically in English in a very short period of time. Feuerstein’s concept of the mediated learning experience (MLE) became an effective strategy to meet this need. According to Feuerstein, MLE “transcends, connects, and deepens experience. It moves the learner into looking for values, types of observations, by help of which the world is organized more meaningfully, which enhances and projects experience” (Feuerstein, 2001). MLE is based on the concept of cognitive modifiability, which focuses on the learning process and contrasts sharply
with Piaget’s (1975/1985) concept of cognitive development as a series of schemes that contribute to organized thought and action (see Flavell, as cited in Schunk, 1996). Feuerstein’s (2001) mediator is not a teacher and “is not concerned with solving the problem at hand. Rather the mediator is concerned with how the learner approaches solving the problem” (Introduction Section, para. 4).

Central Thesis

Could a multicultural, multilingual environment in which enculturation could take place and all doctoral students could address the issues of social science philosophy, economic theory, and personality be created? We felt it could if we used strategies that established a collaborative, constructivist learning environment that made the best use of the native English speakers as mediators. This framework, combined with the following course objectives, helped us to build an instructional strategy to meet the following needs of the learners:

1. connecting experiential learning to new concepts of social and philosophical constructions,
2. transferring learning from one cultural model to another,
3. envisioning global solutions to global problems,
4. extending critical learning skills to new formats, and
5. challenging new second-language speakers to take risks with other learners.

One of the major obstacles in creating the constructivist learning environment was the English-speaking capabilities. The Asian students were out of their natural environment, and we were expecting them to apply the theories and concepts they were learning—in a second language—to their native environment. These students were faced with two very dominant cultural differences: the English-speaking American culture and the dominant Hispanic culture of the university. Not only were we questioning whether learning was transferable and transforming, but the Asian students were questioning if and how they would apply the Western concepts of organizational leadership and philosophy to their Eastern culture. This questioning became a key element of the enculturation process; we achieved a global perspective through practical application of theory to specific cultural differences in meaning.

Part of creating an environment of enculturation involved building a structure from which the students could find comfort in learning. To accomplish this, we created visual, kinesthetic (tactile), and auditory activities that helped the students depict the Eastern and Western philosophical perspectives. An activity involving puzzles was used as a practical exercise in discriminating and solving problems. Unbeknownst to them, the boxes con-
tained mixed pieces; we further restricted them by putting them in groups and disallowing any non-English language. They quickly discovered we did not create a rule to prevent them from collaborating with other groups or using nonverbal forms of communication to barter for missing puzzle pieces; however, they were distressed when we talked about the exercise at its conclusion. What we did not realize was that by giving incorrect information—mixed puzzle pieces—to the Asian students, we had also violated a cultural norm. They felt we were essentially lying to them, which is an affront to the Asian concept of the teaching paradigm: The teacher always gives correct and true information in the transfer of knowledge. This was an affirmation that in this time of global learning and teaching, educators of adults are compelled to rethink their modes of information transferring and learning.

Discussion

The purpose of this study—to create a multicultural, multilingual environment in which enculturation could take place and all doctoral students could address the issues of social science philosophy, economic theory, and personal responsibility—was made difficult in that the course textbooks (those by Fay, 1996; Nussbaum, 2000; and Sen, 1999) were difficult; they required an academic, English vocabulary and were grounded in the Western philosophical concepts of meaning making (Goodman, 1978), time, space, logic, and community. It was essential to find ways in which the English as a second language (ESL) students could make sense of the material. As postulated by Vygotsky, the socializing of the students into an integrated class was important; the Asian students needed to speak with, relate to, and work with the other doctoral students, and vice versa. Not only would the social context of the classroom help students learn better but also the ESL speakers could extend their knowledge of English as they spoke with and related to the American students. To facilitate enculturation, the following strategies were developed and used throughout the semester.

1. Activities and guided discussions were used to enable the ESL students to convey, experientially, their understanding of the concepts.
2. The students were required to present weekly news reports relating issues relevant to their country of origin and applying the course concepts—this created the tie between cognitive learning and culturally based experience.
3. The American students were assigned as MLE mentors to the international students in an effort to encourage relationship building between the cultures. This was also an attempt to enable learning about the different cultures through interaction. These mediators of learning facilitated the relationship between professor and student and also increased the speed, translation, and assimilation of the course readings. They made extensive use of a knowledge management site—www.egroups.com—to reinforce the classroom discussions and external readings.
4. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions were addressed by creating assignments to accommodate the group culture values of the Asian students wherein writing and presenting papers and projects is done by two or more students.

5. We, as part of our teaching strategy, adopted roles and carried those roles throughout the semester for consistency in practice and to reinforce stability in the learning environment.

In a classroom of 27 students whose worldviews collided, whose language skills were different (both in kind and in level) and whose conceptual base carried vastly different intellectual models from which to draw, the MLE mentors became a critical component of enculturation. The American students not only helped the Taiwanese, Korean, Chinese, and Mexican students with course concepts but also enculturated the international students into the American concept of university learning.

The logic we used in structuring this class of students from multiple nations and linguistic backgrounds is described by Myron Tribus (2001) in his article, “Bridging—An Element of Mediated Learning Experience”:

> The process whereby one human helps another to draw the deeper lessons from experience is called Mediated Learning Experience (MLE). MLE describes how one person helps another person to interpret their life experiences and to draw from them rules and principles useful in another time and place. MLE also includes helping the learner “bridge” to other applications and to recognize the meaning of the rules and principles. (para. 8)

According to Tribus, there is a distinct difference between teaching and mediating:

> Teaching is concerned with having students master a subject. The students demonstrate their mastery by what they say about the subject, how they solve problems posed in the subject and by showing skill in using the tools and methods associated with the subject. Teaching presumes the intelligence is already developed and that mastery of the subject is the main goal.

> Mediation is concerned with having students master their own thinking processes. The students demonstrate this mastery by showing an awareness of how they organize their thought processes, how they use their intellectual resources to acquire, organize and analyze information, how they develop strategies for controlling themselves as they encounter challenges. Mediation looks upon the development of intelligence as the main goal and as intelligence is developed, teaching goals will be met. (The Trap Section, paras. 1-4)

We see our own experience as one also of bridging in both directions—a way of thinking, processing, and learning that created learning for all parties in the mediation experience and one that relied on the intellectual notion of continuous growth and development of intellectual functioning.
One of our most important findings was the effectiveness of using the cultures present to establish the classroom culture. For example, the formalities of the traditional Asian classroom are important to the students; these were identified and assimilated on a weekly basis. One Asian student brought tea for each professor to every class. Professors and students alike learned to appreciate this courtesy. In return, birthday cakes were brought in and “Happy Birthday” was sung in Mandarin and English. The Asian cultural gift of generosity and hospitality exemplified enculturation of the American students into an Eastern cultural practice.

A great deal of affirmation and reinforcement was necessary for the Asian and Mexican students. We struggled for several weeks to persuade these students to speak out in class, challenge the readings, challenge their American colleagues, and even challenge the professors—all to no avail. Finally, the Asian group leader informed us (in a formal appointment) that the Asian learning paradigm is that what is published as text or conveyed by the professor must be correct. Questioning the text or the professors is not an acceptable practice in the Asian culture; information in print or from the professor’s mouth carried the weight of authority that was not normally challenged.

It took a great deal of time and effort to convince the Asian students that their experience and prior education qualified them to express their impressions of the readings and discussions. The culminating experience was a class discussion about student participation expectations and an arrangement was negotiated whereby the Asian students could ask their American mentors on-line questions about the readings. This enabled them to strengthen their English skills while also saving face (maintaining the respect of others). This exemplifies the enculturation of the Asian students into a Western practice.

The e-mail groups and the socializing in the class enhanced the connection between the Asian and American students. The Asian students had already formed consistent study groups, a model by which they study and learn and in which they confront the texts, lectures, and one another to discover the essence of the assignments. Although the Asian group learning culture was adopted, we made the decision to mix all students, Asian, Hispanic, and American, in a variety of groups. This contributed to the collaborative nature of the class and to enculturation.

Although the instructional strategy certainly played a key role in fostering enculturation, other factors may also have contributed. UIW has a mission of diversity in admission and social justice. Those students admitted to pursue a doctoral degree at UIW may be predisposed to enculturation in their attraction to an institution of this type. In addition, the sheltering of the Asian students as a cohort for the first two semesters may have created a sense of safety and trust, thereby contributing to their willingness to enculturate. Replication of the experience in future classes in which pretest and posttest
measurements are used can certainly identify attitudinal changes and contribute to the validation of our argument. It is recommended that focus groups or interviews of the students who participate in this experience be conducted within a 2-year period. This would provide students the opportunity to reflect on the degree of enculturation and provide important feedback to be used in the approach to future multicultural, multilingual learning environments.

**Conclusion**

One of the most astonishing outcomes of mixing the cultures was the transference of attitude from one culture to another. The Asian students are extremely respectful of their teachers; homework was timely and beautifully packaged, and assigned readings were taken very seriously. Grades were never questioned or debated. There was rarely a situation that required the negotiation for a later due date. This respect, which was present with some of the American students, was reinforced for the American students and became a matter of philosophical discussion on several occasions.

Another attitudinal transference was the concept of humor and/or teasing. Once the Asian students discovered it acceptable to use humor (even the professors teased one another), they experimented and became quite adept at this social easing of the formality of schooling. One student, a practicing Jew, introduced them to the Jewish traditions of food and hospitality; he also treated his mentees to lunch at his favorite Asian restaurant, thereby sharing the cultural traditions of all. The bonds created between the Eastern and Western students during this semester were fertile, enduring bonds. In fact, one Asian student told the authors about an ancient Chinese saying that they still believe is true: “Once a teacher, always a mother.” In this case, we could also say, “Once a classmate, always a sister/brother.”

The process of enculturation took place for all class participants. This memorable teaching experience did, in fact, accomplish the goal of creating a best practice of enculturation of doctoral students. What we did not anticipate but which occurred by virtue of our participant observation was our own enculturation. It is difficult, even in retrospect, to determine whether we learned or taught more. Assuredly, our lives are enriched by this experience. In reflection, we each have memories of special events that bring the importance of the phrase “what the professor learned in class” into a clear picture. Craven remembers a colleague stopping her one night on the way to class and making the comment, “I feel sorry for you; it must be really tough and exhausting working with foreign students.” The statement could not have been further from the truth; the challenge itself had caused us to stretch, to bring new solutions to problems, to love going to class. Likewise, Kimmel remembers one of the Taiwanese female students coming to her office with a mixture of herbs, spices, and citrus peels; the student saw that her teacher
had a cold and was miserable. Having no idea what she was ingesting, she took the directions of her student to heart and sat in the office chewing the peels, bitter in taste, and learning about traditional Chinese healing. And her cold improved the next day.

The experience of teaching and learning with a completely diverse class was occasionally difficult, but it was also delightful and exhilarating. We both believe that the greater danger for professors in the academy is the rut. Just as the students of today need to see the world replicated in their readings and study, we, the professors, need to experience the world in our student populations. In spite of the fact that two female faculty members of Anglo descent were presenting contextual information that challenges the ways students from masculine cultures—Asian and Hispanic—think, our use of MLE and constructivist learning theory applied to global problems was extremely successful. The experience formed the framework from which future groups of multicultural and multilingual groups of students in a predominantly Hispanic environment could find common ground. Multicultural classes present a learning adventure that can create an exchange of learning and cultural understanding between all the parties—students, teachers, and observers—that closely mirrors the global environment the 21st century offers. It is difficult for us to visualize a learning environment that would not benefit from and be enriched by such a multicultural, multilingual population.

References


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An Examination of Neighborhood Effects on Patterns of High School Attrition Among Puerto Rican Youth in the New York Metropolitan Area

RONALD J. O. FLORES

Abstract: This study examines the effects of spatial concentration of Puerto Ricans on the likelihood of high school attrition among Puerto Rican adolescents. Using data from the 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing, Public Use Microdata Sample B, we found that neighborhoods with very high concentrations of Puerto Ricans did significantly increase the risk of high school attrition among adolescent Puerto Ricans regardless of family background and other relevant characteristics. We also found important differences by gender.

Resumen: Este estudio examina los efectos de concentración espacial de Puertorriqueños considerando la posibilidad de falta de graduación de secundaria entre adolescentes Puertorriqueños. Usando información del Censo de Población y Habitación de 1990 en los EUA, y la Muestra B de Microinformación de Uso Público, se encontró que vecindarios con muy alta concentración de Puertorriqueños incrementaron de manera significativa el riesgo de falta de graduación de secundaria en adolescentes Puertorriqueños, sin importar la historia familiar y otras características relevantes. También se encontraron diferencias importantes basadas en género.

During the 1980s, the overall educational attainment levels of Puerto Rican adults in New York City improved modestly (Salvo, Ortiz, & Lobo, 1994). Although this was certainly a positive trend for a group whose education levels have historically been among the poorest in the city, the education gap between Puerto Ricans and other New York City adults remained sizable (Salvo et al., 1994). At the heart of these differentials is a history of persistently high levels of high school attrition (Fitzpatrick, 1987; Rodriguez, 1991). Despite improved retention during the 1980s, in 1990, one quarter of Puerto Rican youth ages 17 to 19 had not completed high school, nor were they enrolled in school compared to 15% of all New York City youth of the same age. National studies focusing on differences in school retention by race and ethnicity have also documented the educational disadvantage of Puerto Ricans (Fernandez, Paulsen, & Hirano-Hakanishi, 1989; Velez, 1989; 1991).

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1989; Wojtkiewicz & Donato, 1995), although there has been improvement since 1980 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001).

The implications of such low levels of educational attainment for the Puerto Rican community are made more severe by the group’s concentration in the New York metropolitan region, where a premium is placed on highly skilled workers (Hirschl, 1999). Despite an increased residential dispersion in recent years, the plurality of Puerto Ricans on the mainland continues to reside in the New York metropolitan area (Rivera-Batiz & Santiago, 1996). Given their low levels of human capital in a labor market where high skills are at a premium, it is not surprising that Puerto Ricans remain one of the most economically disadvantaged ethnic groups (Salvo et al., 1994). Their condition has become perhaps even more precarious, because growing numbers of immigrants have increased the competition for lower skilled employment in the New York metropolitan area (Flores, 1999; Lobo, Salvo, & Virgin, 1995).

This article will examine the effects of several variables on patterns of high school attrition among Puerto Rican youth ages 16 to 19 in the New York metropolitan area. Although the analysis will account for individual and family characteristics, the focus of the study will be on neighborhood effects. Puerto Ricans have a long history of facing discrimination in the labor and housing markets and have been one of the most highly segregated populations in the nation (Fitzpatrick, 1987; Massey & Denton, 1989; Rodriguez, 1991). Given these experiences, the author hypothesizes that within neighborhoods with high concentrations of Puerto Ricans, there exist both structural impediments to educational achievement as well as a sense of disillusionment and distrust toward mainstream institutions, including the school system. These structural barriers coupled with a sense of pessimism on the neighborhood level has a negative impact on adolescent Puerto Rican school retention.

Review of the Literature

A considerable amount of scholarship has documented the strong effects of family background characteristics on patterns of adolescent high school attrition. For example, research focusing on family structure has found that children living in single-parent families and stepfamilies are at greater risk of not completing high school than those living in married-couple households (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Wojtkiewicz, 1993; Wojtkiewicz & Donato, 1995). This relationship is especially important to this study because Puerto Ricans have very high female headship rates (Landale & Hauan, 1992; Salvo et al., 1994). Parents’ education has also been found to have a strong positive effect on children’s high school completion. It has been argued that well-educated parents create a home environment that is supportive of academic success (Rumberger, 1983).
The socioeconomic condition of the family also has a strong impact on the adolescents’ educational achievement, especially among Latinos (Fernandez & Nielson, 1986). Poverty tends to have a negative effect on high school completion because it increases the likelihood of adolescents taking on adult responsibilities, such as full-time employment, prematurely (Jordan, Lara, & McPartland, 1996). Unstable economic conditions have also been tied to higher levels of residential mobility, which also has a negative effect on school retention (Tucker, Marx, & Long, 1998). Puerto Ricans have a long history of being highly mobile, characterized by a circular pattern between the island and the mainland. This “commuter” migration pattern has been shown to have a very negative effect on the educational achievement of Puerto Rican children (Fitzpatrick, 1987).

Research on the effect of gender on the likelihood of dropping out among Latinos has yielded inconsistent results. For example, Velez (1989) found that girls were found to be more at risk of dropping out because traditional gender role orientations discouraged educational investment in girls. Conversely, Wojtkiewicz and Donato (1995) found that Latina girls relative to Latino boys were more likely to stay in school. It is also clear from a review of the literature that the factors that affect the high school attrition status of boys and girls are different. For example, boys appear to be more affected by their environment, particularly those boys living in inner-city areas (Crane, 1991). Given these differences, we will examine the dropout patterns of Puerto Rican adolescents separately by gender. With respect to age, Rodriguez (1991) observed that the presence of Puerto Ricans in high school tends to diminish as one moves up the grades, suggesting that the likelihood of leaving school increases with age.

The classic assimilation model posits that the foreign born will fare poorly relative to the native born with regard to educational attainment. With increased residence in the United States, however, the struggles of foreign-born youth with a new culture subside, English skills improve, and educational success follows. Extended further over time, the classic view of assimilation predicts a continued, linear improvement in educational attainment across succeeding generations of the immigrant/ethnic group. Recent scholarship has found that the effect of nativity is not as straightforward as predicted by the assimilation model, especially among Latino ethnic groups. Although Rong and Grant (1992) did find educational attainment patterns among Latinos (in general) to increase steadily across all generations, a number of studies on specific Latino subgroups did not find such a consistent pattern. Studies on Mexicans have found that although native-born Mexicans do better educationally than their foreign-born counterparts, U.S.-born children of foreign-born parents did better than U.S.-born children of native-born parents (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Wojtkiewicz & Donato, 1995; Zsembik & Llanes, 1996). Moreover, Velez (1989) found that the pace of educational improvement over generations varied by Latino group.
For example, Cubans relative to Puerto Ricans and Mexicans had higher levels of educational attainment despite being in the United States for the shortest amount of time.

The lack of consonance between the expectations of the assimilation model and the experiences of selected immigrant groups has given rise to alternative explanations of immigrant adaptation. The segmented assimilation model posits that the success of the children of immigrants is tied to the conditions surrounding the immigrant group’s arrival (Portes & Zhou, 1993). The motives behind the initial immigration, the resources available to the immigrants, and the social and economic context surrounding their settlement serve to lay the foundation for the educational success of the next generation (Portes & MacLeod, 1996). The rapid pace of educational achievement of second generation Cubans, for example, can be traced to the more favorable conditions surrounding the experiences of the initial entrants. This positive effect of the Cuban’s mode of incorporation also creates an ethnic effect, which is reflected in a positive attitude about the future among members of the group.

In contrast, Latino groups such as Mexicans and Puerto Ricans have been characterized as “caste-like minorities” (Ogbu, 1978; Velez, 1989; Zsembik & Llanes, 1996). The initial entrants were more likely to be poor and unskilled and faced discriminatory barriers in education, the labor force, and the housing market. These experiences blocked the group’s integration into the social, economic, and political mainstream. In addition to providing a weak socioeconomic foundation for the success of the next generation, the negative experiences of the group serve to weaken the ethnic community’s cohesion and create a sense of disillusionment and general distrust for U.S. institutions among members of later generations (Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Velez, 1989; Zsembik & Llanes, 1996). Because this general disillusionment and cynicism is more likely to affect the third generation, educational attainment increases from the first to the second generation but declines from the second to the third.

In a study of nativity effects on educational attainment among Puerto Ricans, Wojtkiewicz and Donato (1995) found that unlike Mexicans, Mainland-born Puerto Ricans did not demonstrate a notable advantage over their Puerto Rican–born counterparts. Furthermore, nativity did not close the gap between Puerto Rican youth and White non-Latinos as it did among Mexicans. These patterns are consistent with the expectations of the segmented assimilation model. Wojtkiewicz and Donato (1995) also went on to suggest that because Puerto Ricans have historically been segregated in poor neighborhoods with limited economic opportunities (Massey & Denton, 1989), their persistently high rates of high school attrition—net of nativity and other important characteristics—also may be a product of forces acting on the neighborhood level.
Recent scholarship has found that neighborhoods can, in fact, affect the prevalence of social problems such as attrition patterns and teen pregnancy occurring (Crane, 1991). In his analysis, Crane found that when the percentage of the resident workforce in professional and managerial occupations fell below 5%, attrition rates increased dramatically. Crane argued that the underlying mechanism was tied to peer groups and peer pressure. However, although Crane focused on peer pressure as the primary mechanism, the strength of his measure of neighborhood quality (presence of professionals and managers) indicates that role model socialization may be a contributing factor. The absence of role models is the basis of Wilson’s (1987, 1996) “concentration effect” in inner-city, poor, Black communities. Wilson argued that the exodus of the Black middle class from inner-city Black communities resulted in the disappearance of positive role models and the decline of key neighborhood institutions such as the church, local businesses, and social clubs. Their absence facilitates the emergence of a street culture that questions the value of formal education as a vehicle for social mobility (Wilson, 1987).

### Data and Method

The data for this analysis comes from the 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing Public Use Microdata Sample B 5% file (PUMS5%) for the New York Metropolitan Area. The microdata files contain information on a wide range of variables from the 1990 census that facilitate an adequate examination of our model. In addition, in 1990, the Census Bureau introduced the geographic unit public use microdata area (PUMA), which can be used to generate information on the subcounty level. In this analysis, the PUMAs will be used to approximate neighborhoods. Puerto Rican adolescents who were not living in their parents’ household were excluded from the analysis. This was done for a number of reasons. First, attrition affects the likelihood of moving out of the parental home as well as the type of neighborhood in which one settles (Crane, 1991). Thus, when examining neighborhood effects, we would not know if the neighborhood is having the effect or if the neighborhood attracts individuals who did not complete high school. Second, for those adolescents not living at home, no information is available on their parents’ characteristics. The final Puerto Rican youth PUMS 5% subfile consisted of 3,108 cases.

In this analysis, high school attrition is defined as not being enrolled in school at the time of the 1990 census and not having graduated from high school. The use of a cross-sectional household survey such as the census presents some concerns regarding the measurement of attrition. For example, its static nature limits our ability to account for the dynamic character of the attrition process (Rumberger, 1987). Also, household surveys tend
to underestimate attrition patterns, because parents may lie about their children’s educational shortcomings (Fernandez et al., 1989). Nevertheless, the measure is a reasonable one for examining variation within a particular subpopulation.

The census provides detailed information on the composition of households. For this analysis, all households are family households with at least one parent present. Married-couple, single-mother, and single-father families are the categories of the variable. Given that parents’ characteristics have been shown to be very important in predicting educational success of youth, the characteristics of the householder (parents) have been attached to the youth’s record. The parents’ educational attainment was determined by their highest year of formal education completed. Five categories of educational attainment were constructed: less than grammar school, some high school, high school graduate only, some college, and college graduate.

Family socioeconomic status is measured by the likelihood of living in poverty. In measuring poverty, the census takes into account not only income but household characteristics such as size and composition, which affect how well the amount of money coming into the households satisfies the needs of its members. The census also provides specified poverty levels, which gives users some flexibility in defining poverty. In this study, because of the high cost of living in the New York metropolitan area, poverty is defined as below 125% of the census-defined poverty threshold. Three categories of poverty status are used: those living at or below 125% of the poverty threshold, those living at 125% to 199% of the poverty threshold, and those who are living at twice or more the level of the poverty threshold. The economic stability of the household is also measured by residential mobility. Those adolescents who lived in the same house in 1990 as in 1985 were classified as nonmovers, whereas those whose residence was different in 1985 were classified as movers.

Nativity is measured by an individual’s place of birth. Those born in Puerto Rico are defined as island born, and those born anywhere in the 50 states are Mainland born. English language proficiency is measured by the adolescent’s ability to speak English. The variable has three categories: those adolescents who speak English only, those who speak Spanish at home but who have a strong command of English, and those who speak Spanish at home and either speak English poorly or not at all. Generational status is constructed by combining the nativity characteristics of householder (parent) and adolescent. An adolescent was categorized as first generation when both he or she and his or her parent were born on the island, second generation when he or she was born on the Mainland and his or her parent on the island, and third generation when both were born on the Mainland.

The neighborhood variables were constructed by attaching characteristics of the adolescent’s PUMA of residence to the adolescent’s record. As noted earlier, the geographic classification of PUMA first appears in the
1990 census and, for areas as large as the New York metropolitan area, can approximate subcounty communities. The PUMAs are large areas, approximately 100,000 persons in size, and thus are gross approximations of neighborhoods. In New York City, however, the geography of the PUMAs was designed to approximate the city’s community planning districts. Many of these community districts represent one neighborhood, such as East Harlem in Manhattan or Bushwick in Brooklyn. Typically, however, they do include more than one neighborhood, although the neighborhoods tend to be fairly similar demographically.

Two neighborhood-level variables were constructed. The first attempts to measure the effect of the Puerto Rican segregation and concentration on adolescent high school attrition patterns. Following the work of Portes and MacLeod (1996), the author attempts to assess the effect of not only structural barriers to educational success but also the potential impact of the Puerto Rican community’s sense of disillusionment with U.S. institutions. Those areas where the concentration of Puerto Ricans is highest are quite poor and economically distressed and most likely areas where disillusionment would be greatest. Those PUMAs in which at least 40% of the population was Puerto Rican were classified as heavy Puerto Rican concentration. Neighborhoods where Puerto Ricans comprised between 5% and 39% were classified as with modest Puerto Rican presence, and those where less than 5% of the population was Puerto Rican were classified as with minimal Puerto Rican presence. Following the work of Crane (1991) and Wilson (1987), a second indicator attempts to measure neighborhood quality by the presence of managerial and professional workers. The presence of professional and managerial workers is used as a proxy for the presence of role models in a neighborhood.

Findings

Descriptive Analyses

The first set of descriptive analyses examines the variation in characteristics of adolescents by the degree of Puerto Rican concentration in their respective communities (see Table 1). Whereas there were modest differences in the age and gender characteristics of Puerto Rican adolescents by area type, family background characteristics varied substantially by level of Puerto Rican concentration. As Puerto Rican concentration increased, Puerto Rican adolescents were more likely to be in single-parent households and in households with less well-educated parents. Socioeconomically, the majority of adolescents in areas of heavy Puerto Rican concentration were poor compared to 18% of those in areas with few Puerto Ricans. Contrary to expectations, those who resided in low-concentration areas were the most likely to be recent movers than those in the other area types. With respect to nativity, those adolescents living in high-concentration areas were more
likely to be island born and/or living with an island-born parent. Puerto Rican adolescents generally had a good command of English regardless of area

### Table 1
Characteristics of Puerto Rican Adolescents, Ages 16 to 19, by Puerto Rican Concentration, New York Metropolitan Area, 1990 (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood Concentration of Puerto Ricans</th>
<th>Little Presence (n = 673)</th>
<th>Modest Presence (n = 2,057)</th>
<th>Heavy Concentration (n = 378)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married couple</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single father</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single mother</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left ninth grade</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 125</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126 to 199</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 200</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movers</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nativity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third generation</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English proficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English only</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>86.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor English</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 15</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 29</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 44</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 or greater</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of residence. However, greater than one third of those in areas with little Puerto Rican presence spoke only English, compared to roughly 7% in areas of high Puerto Rican concentration.

The differences in the characteristics of Puerto Ricans across these neighborhoods reflect both the assimilation patterns of Puerto Ricans and their spatial bifurcation by class. Puerto Rican adolescents in areas with few Puerto Rican neighbors were the children of those Puerto Ricans with enough social and economic resources to leave the poorer and highly segregated areas where the concentration of Puerto Ricans was very high. The areas in which they lived were most likely to be predominantly White and outside of New York City. In contrast, those in high-concentration areas were more likely to have individual and family characteristics that are strongly tied, as the author will demonstrate shortly, to patterns of high school attrition. What remains to be explored is whether the separation of these two segments of the Puerto Rican population contributes to negative neighborhood effects on those youth in high-concentration areas that further serve to push them out of school.

The findings in Table 2 are consistent with the author’s expectations. Specifically, the likelihood of high school attrition was highest among Puerto Rican adolescents in areas with heavy Puerto Rican concentration. Similarly, the positive effect of the presence of role models in the area was evident because Puerto Rican adolescents living in areas with few professional and managerial workers were at greatest risk of high school attrition. Puerto Rican adolescent boys were somewhat more vulnerable to attrition relative to girls, and age was positively associated with attrition. Family background played a very important role in the likelihood of high school attrition. Living in a married-couple household reduced the likelihood of attrition, as did living with a well-educated parent. Those adolescents living in poverty were much more vulnerable to high school attrition, as were those who were recent movers.

With respect to the assimilation variables, those born in Puerto Rico were more vulnerable to high school attrition relative to second- and third-generation adolescents. Consistent with the straight-line assimilation model, third-generation Puerto Ricans were the least vulnerable to attrition, although their advantage over the second generation was modest. Also consistent with classic assimilation models, Puerto Rican adolescents who struggled with English were the most vulnerable to high school attrition.

**Multivariate Analysis**

Given that the dependent variable is dichotomous, logistic regression is employed in the multivariate analysis. The coefficients presented in a series of models in Table 3 are log-odds ratios. A log-odds ratio greater than 1 indicates the likelihood of high school attrition increases relative to the referent
Table 2
Attrition Rate by Selected Characteristics Among Puerto Rican Adolescents in the New York Metropolitan Area, 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Attrition Rate</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neighborhood characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican concentration level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little presence</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modest presence</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>2,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High concentration</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 15%</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15% to 29%</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>1,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30% to 44%</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45% or more</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual characteristics</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>1,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>1,492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family background characteristics</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household type</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Married couple</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>1,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single father</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single mother</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>1,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left ninth grade</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>In poverty</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>1,252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125-200</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 200</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>1,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mover</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>1,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonmover</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>2,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nativity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational status</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>1,746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third generation</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English proficiency</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English only</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>2,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor English</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

category. Table 3 presents the results of the logistic regression models predicting the likelihood of attrition for all Puerto Rican adolescents. Model 1 (in Table 3) examines the effects of Puerto Rican neighborhood concentration on the likelihood of high school attrition while controlling for generational status and English language proficiency. The log-odds ratios show that net of generational status and English language skills, the likelihood of high school attrition was significantly higher among Puerto Rican adolescents in neighborhoods with a heavy Puerto Rican concentration than in neighborhoods where their presence was modest or small. The model also shows that island-born adolescents and those with poor English language skills were at a significantly greater risk of attrition relative to second- and third-generation Puerto Ricans and adolescents who were facile with English.

Model 2 introduces effects of family background characteristics on an adolescent’s likelihood of attrition. Adolescents living with a single parent, regardless of that parent’s gender, were at greater risk of high school attrition relative to those adolescents who lived in a married-couple family household. Also, consistent with earlier scholarship, parent’s education had a significant effect on an adolescent’s attrition status. The model also shows that movers relative to nonmovers were more at risk of attrition, net of other relevant characteristics. The effects of generational status and English language proficiency lost significance, however, after controls for family background characteristics were introduced. In a separate analysis (equations not shown), the effects of generational status disappeared only after parents’ education was held constant. The significance and direction of the neighborhood concentration effect on attrition status remained virtually unchanged even after the strong effects of family background differences were held constant. Thus, although adolescents in high-concentration areas were much more likely to live in single-parent families and have a poorly educated parent, these differences did not account for the greater vulnerability of attrition among adolescents living in high-concentration areas.

The direction and significance of the log-odds ratios did not change noticeably after controls for age and gender were introduced (Model 3 in Table 3). Boys relative to girls were at a significantly greater risk of attrition net of family background, socioeconomic status, nativity, and neighborhood characteristics. Older Puerto Rican adolescents were significantly more vulnerable to attrition relative to younger ones net of relevant characteristics. In Model 4, controls for the presence of professional and managerial workers in a neighborhood were also introduced. When this measure of neighborhood quality was held constant, the significant differences in the likelihood of attrition between adolescents living in modest– and high–Puerto Rican–concentration areas disappeared. Thus, part of the Puerto Rican neighborhood concentration effect was accounted for by the lack of role models in the area. It was not, however, enough to account for the significant attrition
### Table 3

Results of Logistic Regression Models Predicting High School Attrition Among Puerto Rican Adolescents, Ages 16 to 19, in the New York Metropolitan Area, 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Puerto Rican concentration level</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High concentration</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modest presence</td>
<td>0.717***</td>
<td>0.574**</td>
<td>0.738**</td>
<td>0.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little presence</td>
<td>0.431***</td>
<td>0.734***</td>
<td>0.602***</td>
<td>0.629**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generational status</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation</td>
<td>0.754**</td>
<td>0.862</td>
<td>0.869</td>
<td>0.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third generation</td>
<td>0.681**</td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td>0.906</td>
<td>0.899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English language</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Only</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>0.849</td>
<td>0.646</td>
<td>0.649***</td>
<td>0.649***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor English</td>
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<td>1.342</td>
<td>1.310</td>
<td>1.316</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Household type</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Married couple</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single father</td>
<td>1.913***</td>
<td>1.924***</td>
<td>1.953***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single mother</td>
<td>1.580***</td>
<td>1.582***</td>
<td>1.569***</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Poverty</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In poverty</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 200</td>
<td>1.150</td>
<td>1.084</td>
<td>1.078</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mobility</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonmover</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mover</td>
<td>1.497***</td>
<td>1.607***</td>
<td>1.570***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent’s education</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left ninth grade</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>0.802*</td>
<td>0.836</td>
<td>0.832</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>0.483***</td>
<td>0.495***</td>
<td>0.494***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>0.352***</td>
<td>0.366***</td>
<td>0.361***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>0.245***</td>
<td>0.267***</td>
<td>0.272***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.730***</td>
<td>0.730***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.895***</td>
<td>1.907***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.710***</td>
<td>2.704***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.557***</td>
<td>3.575***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White collar</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 15%</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15% to 29%</td>
<td>0.950</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30% to 44%</td>
<td>1.011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45% or more</td>
<td>0.433**</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Square</strong></td>
<td>53.082***</td>
<td>156.998***</td>
<td>240.686***</td>
<td>246.797***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of freedom</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>2.837</td>
<td>2.837</td>
<td>2.837</td>
<td>2.837</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*p = .10. **p = .05. ***p = .01.
differences between adolescents who lived in low- and high-concentration areas.

**High School Attrition By Gender**

Our findings thus far indicate that Puerto Rican adolescent boys were at a significantly greater risk of attrition than were Puerto Rican adolescent girls net of family background, socioeconomic status, nativity, and neighborhood characteristics. To assess these differences more carefully, we present the multivariate analysis separately for girls and boys in Table 4. A comparison of the first models shows that the Puerto Rican neighborhood concentration effect appears to be stronger for boys than for girls (see Table 4). Net of other relevant characteristics, boys living in neighborhoods with a heavy concentration of Puerto Ricans were at a significantly greater risk of attrition relative to boys living in areas with a modest or little Puerto Rican presence. Unlike Puerto Rican boys where no significant generational differences were evidenced, Puerto Rican girls born on the island were significantly more vulnerable to attrition relative to second- and third-generation girls. The impact of family structure, although important for both boys and girls, appears to be stronger for girls. Parents’ education continued to have strong effects on the risk of attrition for both boys and girls, whereas mobility had a much stronger effect on boys than it did on girls. Among boys, movers were significantly more at risk of attrition, whereas among girls the effect was insignificant. Age does have a strong positive effect on the likelihood of attrition for both boys and girls.

The second models introduce controls for the presence of professional workers, the author’s second measure of neighborhood effects. Once controlled, the significant effects of Puerto Rican neighborhood concentration disappear among Puerto Rican boys, suggesting that some of the Puerto Rican neighborhood concentration effect was tied to the presence of role models, or at least successful employed workers. Among girls, the strong presence of professional workers was significant. It appears that economic stability and neighborhood resources are particularly important for girls remaining in school. For boys, the presence of a high concentration of Puerto Ricans had a strong effect on high school retention, but it was somehow tied to other neighborhood characteristics, such as the presence of educated professionals.

**Summary and Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to determine if the segregation and resultant spatial concentration of Puerto Ricans had an independent effect on the likelihood of high school attrition among Puerto Rican adolescents. The findings show that when the concentration of Puerto Ricans in an area was greater than 40%, the likelihood of high school attrition among Puerto Rican
### Table 4
Results of Logistic Regression Models Predicting High School Attrition Among Puerto Rican Adolescents, Ages 16 to 19, in the New York Metropolitan Area, 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican concentration level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High concentration</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modest presence</td>
<td>0.882</td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td>0.639**</td>
<td>0.722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little presence</td>
<td>0.811</td>
<td>0.661</td>
<td>0.486***</td>
<td>0.611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational status</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation</td>
<td>0.517***</td>
<td>0.507***</td>
<td>1.292</td>
<td>1.295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third generation</td>
<td>0.631*</td>
<td>0.582**</td>
<td>1.244</td>
<td>1.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Only</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>0.694</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>0.642**</td>
<td>0.644**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor English</td>
<td>1.359</td>
<td>1.421</td>
<td>1.365</td>
<td>1.372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household type</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married couple</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single father</td>
<td>2.160**</td>
<td>2.223**</td>
<td>1.788**</td>
<td>1.776**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single mother</td>
<td>1.716***</td>
<td>1.723***</td>
<td>1.484***</td>
<td>1.475**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In poverty</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125-200</td>
<td>1.103</td>
<td>1.112</td>
<td>1.027</td>
<td>1.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 200</td>
<td>0.780</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>0.790</td>
<td>0.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonmover</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mover</td>
<td>1.278</td>
<td>1.211</td>
<td>1.890***</td>
<td>1.863***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s education</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left ninth grade</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td>0.842</td>
<td>0.842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>0.348***</td>
<td>0.343***</td>
<td>0.609***</td>
<td>0.614***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>0.252***</td>
<td>0.245***</td>
<td>0.464***</td>
<td>0.473***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>0.288***</td>
<td>0.280***</td>
<td>0.255***</td>
<td>0.261***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.104***</td>
<td>2.155***</td>
<td>1.832***</td>
<td>1.831***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.382***</td>
<td>2.390***</td>
<td>3.071***</td>
<td>3.032***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.623***</td>
<td>3.742***</td>
<td>3.747***</td>
<td>3.716***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 15%</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15% to 29%</td>
<td>1.098</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30% to 44%</td>
<td>1.637</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.708</td>
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<tr>
<td>45% or more</td>
<td>0.213**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.598</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
<td>123.671***</td>
<td>134.372***</td>
<td>129.09***</td>
<td>130.979***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of freedom</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>1,369</td>
<td>1,369</td>
<td>1,468</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


*p = .10, **p = .05, ***p = .01.
adolescents, but especially boys, increased significantly net of family back-
ground, generational status, and other personal characteristics. This neigh-
borhood concentration effect was a manifestation of the caste-like minority
experiences of the Puerto Rican population. Combining the work of Portes
and MacLeod (1996) and Ogbu (1978), the author posited that the experi-
ences of Puerto Ricans with discrimination, segregation, and oppression
(Fitzpatrick, 1987; Massey & Denton, 1989; Rodriguez, 1991) have created,
on the neighborhood level, both structural impediments for educational suc-
cess as well as an associated sense of disillusionment and cynicism with
mainstream U.S. institutions, including the school system.

The findings also demonstrated that the effects of generational status
and English language proficiency varied considerably by gender. For boys,
there were no significant differences by generational status, which when
coupled with the strong neighborhood effects suggests that the applicability
of the segmented assimilation model is more appropriate for boys than girls.
Given that Latino boys are more likely to cite economic reasons for dropping
out (Jordan et al., 1996), the lack of generational differences in education
may also reflect a perception among U.S.-born Puerto Rican boys that for-
mal schooling conflicts with making economic contributions to their fami-
lies, both now and in the future. They may seek to fulfill the economic con-
tributor role either through illegitimate channels or legitimate employment.
Perhaps related to this is the relationship between English language profi-
ciency and the likelihood of high school attrition. After holding socioeco-
nomic status constant, English-only speakers were more at risk of attrition
than were bilingual speakers (bilingual speakers speak Spanish at home but
have good command of English). The English speakers may be more likely
to find employment in the formal sector and choose to work rather than stay
in school.

In contrast, generational status has a very powerful effect on the likeli-
hood of girls’ high school attrition. Those adolescent girls born on the island
were at greater risk of high school attrition relative to those born on the
Mainland (both second and third generation), net of family background and
neighborhood characteristics. One explanation is that these girls came from
traditional families who may not have seen the merits of investing resources
on their daughters’ education. Furthermore, girls from traditional families
may have been expected to satisfy household responsibilities such as child
care (for either younger siblings or for their own children) and domestic
chores, which may have conflicted with their educational needs. Another ex-
planation is that island-born Puerto Rican girls may have gotten off to a bad
start in school, resulting in continued poor academic performance and grade
delays. Poor grades have been found to have a strong negative effect on school
retention and be a significant increment on the likelihood of pregnancy among
adolescent women (Luker, 1996). Among Puerto Ricans, the dropout rate
among adolescent mothers is exceptionally high (Salvo et al., 1994).
Consistent with the author’s expectations, a Puerto Rican adolescent’s family background had a strong impact on his or her likelihood of high school attrition. Those adolescents who lived with one parent were significantly more vulnerable to attrition relative to those who lived with a married couple. These differences remained significant after controls for socioeconomic status and residential mobility were introduced and suggest that the disruption in the educational process experienced by adolescents in single-parent families is more than a function of economic strain. The findings also confirm the importance of a parent’s education—particularly receiving at least a high school diploma—on the educational attainment of Puerto Rican adolescents. Previous scholarship has shown that one of the reasons for lower levels of educational achievement among Latino/Latinas relative to other groups is the generally lower levels of parental education (Kavanaugh & Retish, 1991). As a consequence, many Latino parents have difficulty serving as advocates for the child’s education (DeBlassie & DeBlassie, 1996).

Concluding Comments

Although these findings clearly point to the independent effect of neighborhood characteristics on attrition rates of Puerto Rican adolescents, the exact nature of the mechanisms of this effect has not been shown. To understand better these neighborhood effects, future scholarship—both qualitative and quantitative—should focus on how alienation, disillusionment, and cynicism within poor Puerto Rican areas are reflected in behavior on the street level. Furthermore, the effect of neighborhood structural barriers, such as the quality of local schools, to the educational success of Puerto Rican adolescents must be a part of future research agendas. Schools in Bushwick, Brooklyn and in the South Bronx, where concentrations of Puerto Ricans are highest, are among the poorest in the region. Inadequate academic facilities, decaying structures, the constant threat of violence, and an inability to retain the best teachers all serve to further alienate Puerto Rican adolescents from the education process. These relationships must be examined in greater detail if we are to pinpoint the causes for Puerto Rican educational disadvantage.

Last, despite the persistent educational disadvantages of Puerto Ricans, it is important to recognize that since Puerto Ricans have been in the New York metropolitan region, they have fought aggressively for better education programs and better schools for their children (Fitzpatrick, 1987; Rodriguez, 1991). Some of the fruits of those efforts are reflected in the slow but steady improvement in high school retention among Puerto Ricans over the past 20 years. The growth of a relatively small but stable middle class is also evidence that Puerto Ricans, in their efforts for educational success, are reaching their goals. However, there remain a significant number of Puerto
Ricans’ families and adolescents living in neighborhoods that are severely socially and economically isolated. Efforts must be made to strengthen the institutions of those communities by providing more jobs, better housing, and strong schools. Institutions of higher learning can also contribute to reducing levels of high school attrition by taking a more active role in these communities. One way is through community-based learning initiatives where community leaders, faculty members, and students join together in developing programs and activities targeted toward at-risk populations. Without these efforts, the educational prospects of many young Puerto Ricans appear dim.

Notes

1. Wojtkiewicz and Donato (1995), due to a limited number of cases, were not able to examine the educational attainment differences between second- and third-generation Puerto Ricans.

2. It must also be noted that the effect of nativity (as measured by place of birth) has always been somewhat unclear among Puerto Ricans, because of the circular nature of their migration patterns. Thus, young people born on the island may have been raised on the Mainland, and vice versa.

3. The 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing Public Use Microdata Sample file was created by extracting those counties in the New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut state files that compose the New York/New Jersey/Connecticut Consolidated metropolitan statistical area. For this analysis, the New York metropolitan areas includes the five boroughs of New York City (Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, Staten Island), 7 surrounding counties in New York State (Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland, Orange, Putnam, and Dutchess), 11 counties in northeastern New Jersey (Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset, Union), and 2 southeastern counties in Connecticut (Fairfield and Litchfield).

4. Puerto Rican adolescents not living with their parents were either living on their own, living with another relative, living in a group quarter, or living in an institutionalized setting. The exclusion of this subgroup of adolescents introduces bias into the computations. Crane (1991), however, argued that the exclusion tends to bias the results downward, because teens not living with their parents are more likely to be dropouts and more likely to live in lower quality areas.

5. In this analysis, only one parent’s characteristics are used. If the householder (the person who answered the survey and who identified the adolescent as his “own child” was married, the characteristics of his spouse could also attached to the adolescent’s record. However, the relationship between the householder’s spouse and the adolescent is not clear, and thus, without further analysis I felt it was best not to incorporate the spouse’s characteristics at this time.

6. There were a small number of individuals who were not born on the Mainland or on the island. Because of the uncertainty of how to categorize these cases, we excluded them from the analysis.

7. There was a small number of cases in which an island-born adolescent was born to a Mainland-born parent. Those cases, perhaps reflecting the circular nature of Puerto Rican migration, were not included in the analysis.

References


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Perspective

The Unspoken Reasons for Hispanic Undereducation

LIONEL SOSA

Intellectually, Latinos in America believe that education is the key to success and to the achievement of the American dream. This belief has been proved in study after study. Still, the fact remains: Half of all Hispanics do not finish high school today. Of the half that do finish, only one in four is academically prepared to enter and to succeed in a 4-year university environment.

It is as though Hispanics are saying, “We think education is the most important thing to do, but we don’t do it.”

This does not make sense, does it? So what is going on here?

Some experts site the following reasons:

1. Economics: Hispanics are poorer and therefore cannot afford college tuition and expenses at the same level as other Americans.
2. University systems do not reach out to or welcome Latinos.
3. Culturally biased testing puts Hispanic at a disadvantage.
4. Poor federal and state policies make it tougher for Latinos to effectively compete.

These observations tell only half the story. The other half goes widely unreported. It has to do with the familial, social, and cultural expectations that become barriers for many of our children. These expectations (usually lower expectations) play a bigger part in the equation than most experts care to admit.

I cannot say I blame them for not broaching the subject. If the expert were an Anglo, he or she would quickly be branded a racist. And most Hispanics will not touch the subject because they believe it reflects badly on our own Latino culture and values. So what do we do? We blame the system.

That is a big mistake. When we blame others, we automatically make ourselves a victim—a helpless minority group unable to do for ourselves. We also become dependent on the establishment for rescue. This is not honorable. We must take our part of the responsibility. We must also take a lead-
ership position in helping to solve the problem. Why? Because if we own up to it, we can help solve the problem sooner.

Last spring, at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, I led a study group (about half of them Hispanics) that explored the unspoken causes behind Hispanic undereducation. At semester’s end, the study group concluded that there are four distinct issues having to do with cultural, familial, and environmental barriers that contribute to the situation.

1. The Issue of Poverty and Family
   - The need to work to help the family. Hispanics put a great value on the work ethic. We pride ourselves on hard work. Therefore, parents unconsciously instill the idea in their children that work is more honorable than education.
   - No family tradition of higher education. Because only 10% of Hispanics have completed higher education, 90% do not have a tradition.
   - Lack of family commitment to higher education. The lack of tradition tends to drive the lack of real commitment. Many Hispanics mistakenly believe that it is not realistic to think that their children have a real crack at college.
   - Lack of family involvement in school activities. Hispanics value authority. Schools and universities are perceived as figures of authority. When our children enter school, many parents leave it up to the educational system to do the job. In addition, many parents’ own lack of education make it uncomfortable to get involved.
   - Belief that college is not affordable. Hispanics draw an erroneous conclusion: “There’s no way that I’ll be able to afford it.” Because we earn lower incomes, a bigger percentage of our salary goes toward education. With bigger families, the numbers are exacerbated.
   - Fear of “Anglo influence.” Many parents feel that their child will forsake conservative Latino values of family, frugality, and morality for a more liberal set of values influenced by the university.
   - Early pregnancy. Hispanics have the highest incidence of teenage pregnancy. Again, culture and history play a part in this. Many young Hispanic females are taught to feel that they become women upon the celebration of their “coming-out party”—the quinceanera, or 15th birthday. In fact, this was the custom in the old days, when a young woman was delivered to her husband on her 15th birthday.

2. The Issue of the Unknown
   - Lack of highly educated role models. Popular Hispanic entertainers such as Jennifer Lopez, Enrique Iglesias, Ricky Martin, and Christina Aguilera are not true role models—they are “idol” models, as one student in my study group described it. High-profile Latinos in business, politics, and other leadership positions, the true role models, are not as easy to find.
   - Fear of not fitting in. A college environment is not a comfortable place for most Latino families. Some assume that they will be treated with discrimination.
   - Intimidated and confused by the process. Hispanic parents have little real knowledge of the steps they need to take to prepare their children for college. Many of us do not know exactly how to guide them, and we do not always understand how to work with the school counselors.
• Fear of debt. Many Hispanic families fear that the financial burden of repaying student loans is more than they can handle.
• Not believing it is possible. Because we see so few of our own earning diplomas, we do not have a frame of reference for the possibilities.

3. The Issue of Low Expectations
• Predisposition toward work rather than college. It is in the culture. This expectation usually becomes reality.
• Traditional acceptance and respect for “the will of God.” Hispanic faith in the will of the Lord and being satisfied and grateful for the little things can become a good excuse for lower achievement. Accumulations of wealth, power, or influence are not always viewed as positive goals in the Hispanic culture.
• Children’s fear of leaving home or hometown. Many Hispanic youth have not traveled very far from home, and so the thought of going away to an unfamiliar place can be excessively intimidating.
• Parents’ fear of their children leaving home. One fear feeds upon the other. The result can many times result in lost opportunities.
• Lower definition of success. Hispanics value hard work and often view jobs such as a janitor or a truck driver as the achievement of the American dream. In fact, we do not have to be limited to blue-collar jobs.
• Lower expectations outside the family. Influencers such as teachers, counselors, neighbors, administrators, and even school boards often unknowingly set lower standards for Latinos.

4. The Issue of Unawareness
• Unawareness of the income opportunities. Many Hispanic parents and their children have not fully explored the opportunities a college degree can create. Many are unaware of the difference between the salaries of a high school dropout, a high school graduate, a college graduate, and a college graduate with an advanced degree.
• Unawareness of the courses our children should be taking at any given grade. Eighth grade is the “magic window” that many times decides the future of the child. Many parents are unaware that math and science courses as well as honors classes will make the difference between getting a high school diploma and a college-ready high school diploma.
• Unawareness of where to go for coaching and information. Because many Hispanics leave education to the school authority, we never fully understand how the system works and the many ways that help is available.
• Unawareness of scholarship opportunities. Because Hispanics generally feel that we will not be able to afford college anyway, many times we fail to learn how to find and apply for scholarships.
• Unawareness of the long-term effects of undereducation versus higher education. This lack of awareness can contribute to a lack of focus and drive toward the attainment of a degree.

This list seems onerous and exhausting, I know. But the barriers can be overcome, although only through a consistent public awareness program made possible through Spanish and English messages in the media. These would include television, radio, outdoor, magazine, and newspaper mes-
sages that would be repeated two to five times a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year, for 20 years running.

In a media-driven society, mass media is the only way to create new beliefs and new behaviors. If Nike can sell $100 sneakers to low-income inner-city kids, we can sell education to that same youth.

If we can make every parent believe that his or her child can and will get a college education, if we can make them accept this fact as the new reality as well as their responsibility—through carefully crafted media messages—the job can and will be done. But we cannot wait any longer—the time to make it happen is now.

This initiative will take the efforts of educators, government, business, and media all working together to create an effective campaign. The Bush administration is currently working on developing such a campaign, as is the Texas Higher Education Coordinating board. These efforts are to be applauded and encouraged, for surely they will solve the problem—but only with the help of the Latino community. And only when we take our heads out of the sand and address the fact that our very culture, precious as it is, does not always work in our favor.

Lionel Sosa is CEO of Education Strategies, headquartered in San Antonio, Texas. He is the author of The Americano Dream and is recognized internationally for his work in advertising, marketing, and public relations. He serves on the Texas A&M Board of Regents.
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