

**COLLEGE LATINO STUDENTS: CULTURAL
INTEGRATION, RETENTION, AND
SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION**

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ABSTRACT

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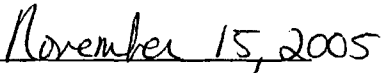
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine and gain a deeper understanding of Latino College students' sub-cultures and how their cultural integration can affect their retention and completion of a baccalaureate degree. Also, this study sought to understand the cultural factors that influenced student retention. The participants were given a survey to complete for demographic information, and then were interviewed to capture each of their stories and experiences.

Twenty participants were involved in the study. All of the participants were self-identified as Latinos and came from several different, four-year, residential universities. There were nine men and eleven women. Of the twenty participants, five were self-identified as Cuban, five were Mexican, five were Puerto Rican, and five were South American.

Coding was used to analyze the data. After the coding was completed, the researcher isolated recurring themes, grouping and categorizing responses to discover commonalities and differences of certain phenomena in the participants' words. As a result of the analysis, several themes were developed. These themes included: Latino perceptions of cultural differences among subgroups, factors influencing college attainment, and barriers related to educational attainment. Additionally, the responses from the participants tended to support the Nontraditional Student Attrition model on

retention, the Bicultural Orientation Model on cultural awareness, and the Ethnic Identity Development model.

The participants identified general areas on how Latinos could become successful in higher education as well as what educational institutions could do to enhance the Latino attainment of a college education. Additionally, the findings in this research indicated that there is no simple answer to retention for Latino students. The factors related to cultural integration, retention, and successful completion are complex. There are more questions that need to be answered to fully understand the issues related to Latino students and their success in our educational system.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE LATINO STUDENTS:
CULTURAL INTEGRATION, RETENTION,
AND SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND
FOUNDATIONS

BY
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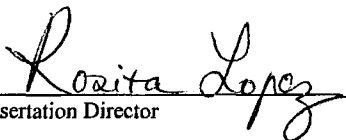
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I also want to mention my parents. I wanted them to be proud of my achievements and proud of this study. It was because of them that I started this research. I waited until the very end to share my paper with my dad and mom, Tom and Myra. I was anxious, nervous, and excited to have them read what I had done. I hope they are still proud of me. My parents are the role models every son should have.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Problem

The Latino community in the United States is the most undereducated racial and ethnic group relative to the total population (Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Perez & Salazar, 1993; Rodriguez & Guido-DiBrito, 2000). In fact, Latinos lag behind all other ethnic and racial groups in terms of median years of education (Gutierrez, Yeakley & Ortega, 2000; U.S. Census, 2000). In the early 1990's, only one in two Latinos completed high school, compared with 80 percent for non-Latinos (Chapa & Valencia, 1993). During the last decade of the twentieth century, this number has increased steadily for Latinos while Whites have stayed fairly constant, 82 percent for Whites to 57 percent for Latinos. The number of Latinos entering higher education is growing, but universities and colleges have done little to access the Latino pool, with only 22 percent moving on college (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Hall & Rowan, 2001; Ramirez, 1993). If these entrance rates continue, Latinos will be left behind and not be prepared for the twenty-first century in higher education.

Although there has been a reported increase in the number of Latinos in higher education, the increase is not proportionate to the overall growth of the Latino population. The increase is generally located in two-year community colleges, from

which the transfer rate to four-year colleges is low. There are also a disproportionate number of part-time Latino college students compared to all students (IBHE 2001; President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2000; U.S. Census, 2000). In fact, the Latino is the only major ethnic group to more likely attend two-year than four-year colleges (Ramirez, 1993). According to Tinto (1988), if students attend only community colleges, they may not have the same social and intellectual integration as students attending four-year colleges. This disparity may make success more difficult for the Latino student.

There was a 48 percent increase in Latino enrollments in the 1980's and 1990's in both two-year and four-year institutions, yet an increase in the college-age population masks an actual decline in the Latino college-going rate (Carter & Wilson, 1993; Hurtado, S., 1993, 1994; IBHE, 2001). Despite this growth, the gap between minority and white participation rose from 33 percent to 44 percent during the same period (IBHE, 2001). In 2000, of the 14.5 million students in higher education, Latinos made up more than nine percent. However, while Latino college enrollment and degree attainment are increasing, they are not equivalent to Latinos' representation in the population. Although Latinos were seven percent of the population age able to attend college in a traditional manner, only 5.5 percent of students enrolled were Latino (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2000; Ramirez, 1993). The disparity of where Latinos are going to school is also disproportionate. Just over 50 percent of all Latinos enrolled in higher education are in two states: California and Texas. Almost 75 percent

of Latinos in higher education are in just five states: California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2000).

Although record college enrollments were reported for racial/ethnic minorities throughout the 1990s, the gaps in the college participation rate and attainment levels among white, African-American, and Latino students have actually widened over the last decade (Carter & Wilson, 1993, 1997, 2001; IBHE, 2001; Perna, 2000).

Nationally, Latino enrollment and completion rates have increased substantially over the past decade. However, Latinos take longer and do not complete college at the same rate as do other minorities and Whites (Hurtado, S., 1994; President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2000).

In Illinois, Latinos continue to trail all non-Latinos (Blacks, Whites, and Asians) in attendance and completion rates at four-year institutions, except Native Americans. From 1990 to 1999, Latinos received 3.6 percent and 5.6 percent respectively of all bachelor's degrees received. However, actual numbers are relatively low (from 1,308 to 2,756). In the same time frame, Whites decreased in total bachelor's degrees from 83.4 percent to 74.8 percent. Again, the actual numbers illustrate the wide gap in degrees earned (from 24,733 and 22,086 respectively) (IBHE, 2000). As former President Bill Clinton (2000) states: "The problem, quite simply, is that not enough Hispanics are getting college degrees" (p. 112).

Within the Latino community, some groups have done better than others in regard to higher educational attainment. Mexican Americans are grossly

underrepresented in higher education, and the degree of under representation increases at each success level (Carter & Wilson, 1993, 2001). Mexican Americans have the lowest college completion rate (five percent), followed by Puerto Ricans (ten percent), and Cubans (twenty percent) (Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Vazquez & Ramirez-Krodel, 1989). Also, while only seven percent of the Mexican population held bachelor's degrees, Cuban Americans had as much as twenty-five percent of the population holding bachelor's degrees or higher (U.S. Census, 2000).

Another issue facing Latinos is institutional recognition of multiculturalism and diversity. Universities and colleges recognize the value of diversity. Institutions reinforce the idea that not only do individuals differ from one another but that the diversity they bring is a great source of strength to the schools. Diverse educational settings are more intellectually stimulating and produce long-term benefits for all students and are recognized under existing law and the US Supreme Court decisions in the University of California Regents v Bakke and Grutter v Bollinger cases (IBHE, 2000).

Diversity in the various forms is critical to the overall success of Hispanic-American males in higher education (Hall & Rowan, 2001). To have any diversity on its campuses, it is in the interests of a university that the highest numbers of qualified Latino students apply and enroll in the system. Colleges need to affirm, support, enable, and reinforce Latinos' capacity to fully develop themselves as students and as individuals (Gandara & Lopez, 1998; Rendon, 1993). As the Latino population continues to grow, it is expected that its enrollment in institutions of higher education

will also increase. The increase in the enrollment of Latino students in higher education will not only add to the cultural diversity of the student population, but it will also pose several important challenges or needs (Verdugo, 1995).

Latinos frequently interpret the culture climate at predominantly White colleges and universities as alienating, isolating, hostile, and unsupportive (Hurtado, 1994). Institutions face the challenge of promoting civility and tolerance among students and creating a sensitive faculty. Increasing the diversity of an institution can lead to better institutional climates for Latinos and all students in general (Hurtado, 1993).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine and understand Latino college students' sub-cultures and how their cultural integration can affect their retention and completion of a baccalaureate degree. Also, this study sought to understand the cultural factors that influence student retention.

Several research questions served to guide and inform this study:

1. What differences, if any, are there between students from Latino cultures who have been living in the United States?
2. Does this difference continue within college – do Latino students bring their culture with them to the college setting?
3. Do Latino students assimilate with the mainstream or retain their “given” culture?

4. In what ways, if any, did their own current culture influence the experiences, retention, and successful completion by Latino college students?

The Diversity of Latino Subgroups

The challenges to develop multicultural understanding and appreciation are both compelling and complex. Although it is necessary to identify predominant cultural characteristics to appreciate the context in which individuals function, it is essential to recognize individual and subgroup differences within each racial and ethnic group (Chestnut, 2000; Frisby & Lorenzo-Luaces, 2000; Kane, 1998; Phinney, 1996; Rodriguez & Bernstein, 1995). Within each of the major racial/ethnic populations in the United States, including African-Americans, Latinos, and American Indians, are varying attitudes, values, behaviors, language, culture, education, income, acculturation, and racial/ethnic identity (Astone & Nunez-Wormack, 1991; Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993; Chestnut, 2000). There is as much intra-group diversity as there is inter-group diversity. By ignoring intra-group diversity, researchers promote the view that the group is homogeneous and that model data from a single sample can be generalized to an entire racial/ethnic group (Padilla, 1985).

There are also political differences that arise with the labeling and self-labeling within a diverse group. Minorities simultaneously experience enculturation within their own group culture while also being exposed to socialization forces within the dominant culture (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993; Rodriguez & Guido-DiBrito,

2000). Recognizing the differences within racial/ethnic groups is an important goal of achieving cultural diversity in education.

College-age students within the same ethnic group differ substantially in their views upon college entry due to demographic characteristics (gender and ethnicity), prior socialization context (class size, hometown), and attitudes or values (self-concept) (Hurtado, 1993, 1994). Persons who speak Spanish are more closely culturally aligned with their self-identified culture than those who do not (Frisby & Lorenzo-Luaces, 2000).

The terms Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably within this research study. Although there are differences in how people interpret these terms, for the purpose of consistency, the term Latino will refer to both Latino and Hispanic and vice versa. The sub-groups of Latinos have been broken up into four distinct groups: (a) Mexican (Mexican-American, Chicano); (b) Puerto Rican; (c) Cuban; and (d) Central or South American.

Definition of Terms

Here are terms used throughout this study that merit specific definition.

Acculturation. The process of two cultures coming together where an individual's behavior and thinking change as a result of contact with a dominant culture and the degree of retention of the individual's native culture, values, beliefs, and traditions (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Phinney, 1990).

Adjustment (to college). Institutional commitment, feelings of academic alteration, and the absence of psychological distress (Hurtado et al., 1994).

Alienation. Experiencing estrangement in a particular environment or situation (Gonzalez, 1999).

Assimilation. The process by which a group of people give up their own unique culture and take on the ways of the majority culture in order to “fit in.” (Robinson et al., 1997).

Biculturalism. Involves language and behavioral preferences, allowing the individual to feel comfortable in two diverse cultural environments (Suarez & Fowers, 1997; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980).

Campus Climate. The current perceptions, attitudes and expectations that define the educational institution and its members (Peterson & Spencer, 1990).

Campus Culture. Deeply embedded patterns of organizational behavior, as well as the shared values, assumptions, and beliefs that members have about their institution (Gonzalez, 1999; Peterson & Spencer, 1990).

Cuban (American). A person who is from Cuba or has ancestors from Cuba.

Cultural Identity. A conceptual framework used to describe and understand cultural development. It is also used to describe an individual’s personal attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with one’s own culture (Keefe & Padilla, 1987).

Culture. Observable customs, traditions and practices; a group’s heritage and history; characteristic ways that people solve environmental problems; a common set

of explicit or implicit values that guide behavior; arbitrary meanings assigned to symbols, always changing (Chestnut, 2000).

Cultural Awareness. Reflects the individual's cultural knowledge, such as language, history, traditions, and cultural heroes, and is considered the more general component of cultural change (Arbona & Novy, 1991; Keefe & Padilla, 1987).

Cultural Capital. The cultural knowledge one has about one's own culture that is inherited or learned through families and neighborhoods (Bourdieu, 1986).

Cultural Inversion. The tendency of a minority group to see behaviors, events, and meanings of the dominant group as irrelevant to them (Cota & Knight, 1991).

Demographics. Statistical characteristics of human populations (Schrank, 1995).

Discrimination. The behavior of acting out a prejudice; restricting a person or group from a certain activity or organization because of race, culture, religion, gender, or sexual orientation (Robinson et al., 1997).

Diversity. The bringing together of persons of different backgrounds, personal characteristics, or perspectives to create a community in which all ideas are respected and explored and all students benefit from the experience. It refers to differences in student talents and interests and to differences in region, class, culture, gender, age, race/ethnicity, and disability (IBHE, 2001).

Diversity of Environments. The opportunity for all kinds of cultural, political, and social organizations to develop and express themselves within institutions (Adelman, 1997).

Enculturation. The process by which children learn the values and beliefs of their derivative culture (Cota & Knight, 1991).

Ethnic Identity. The perceptions, knowledge, and ownership of the cultural traditions, values, behaviors, and feelings of one's ethnic group relative to the dominant culture (Phinney, 1990).

Ethnic Loyalty. A person's preference for one cultural orientation and ethnic group rather than the other, corresponding to the concept of ethnic identity (Arbona & Novy, 1991).

Ethnic Social Orientation. A measure of in-group socializing that is related to both cultural assimilation and ethnic loyalty (Keefe & Padilla, 1987).

Ethnicity. An identification that is based on shared culture, religion, geography, and language, which gives individuals a sense of kinship and loyalty (Abalos, 1986; Torres, 1999).

Hispanic. Refers to individuals whose cultural heritage traces back to a Spanish-speaking country with a history of Spanish-American colonization (Harry, 1992).

Institutional Racism. Practices and systemic behavior, whether intentional or simply a result of tradition, which discriminate against a particular racial or ethnic group. These are often sanctioned in institutional practice (Otero & Smith, 1977).

Latino. A term used to describe people of Latin descent. This includes Hispanic, Chicano, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Mexican, other Spanish-

speaking countries in Central and South America, or others who identify themselves as Hispanic, such as Brazilians.

Marginalization. Refers to experiencing repression or stigmatization or being placed in a position of marginal importance, influence, or power (Gonzalez, 1999).

Mexican (American). A person who is from Mexico or has ancestors from Mexico.

Migrant Latino. A person who is of Latino descent but is working in the United States with a work visa.

Minority. A group whose population is composed of less than one-half the size of the total population. It may have a negative implication that a person is “less than” another person (Robinson et al., 1997).

Multiculturalism. The belief that all cultures have value and each individually can bring value to the whole (Robinson et al., 1997).

Prejudice. Discriminatory attitudes toward a culture belief or personal characteristic different from your own. Prejudging a person based on the group he or she is classified in (Robinson et al., 1997). A preconceived judgment or opinion, often based on limited information (Hurtado, 1999).

Puerto Rican. A person who is from Puerto Rico or has ancestors from Puerto Rico.

Race. A group of people who share physical features, such as skin color or eye shape (Robinson et al., 1997).

Racism. A system of advantage based on race retooled in the belief that one race is superior to another race. Racism denotes power and political, economic, and social dominance (Robinson et al., 1997; Hurtado, 1999).

Retention. A term used to describe students who stay in schools of higher education and actually graduate within seven years of starting classes.

School. Universities and colleges in the United States.

Socialization. Transmission and internalization of cultural, societal, and familial values (Cota & Knight, 1991).

South or Central American. A person who is from Central or South America or has ancestors from that region.

Stereotype. A negative or limiting preconceived belief about a specific group that is applied to all members of that group (Robinson et al., 1997).

Structural Diversity. The numerical representation of various racial, ethnic, and gender groups on campus (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton, Pederson, & Allen, 1999).

Success. A perception of satisfying one's goals; feeling a sense of achievement without giving up on one's own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Wolf-Wendle, 1998).

Assumptions

There have been a variety of research studies focusing on Latino College students scattered throughout education, psychology, anthropology, and sociology literature. It appears that most of this research is conducted because there is an assumption that there is something wrong with being Latino or that Latinos need to be

fixed in some way (Hurtado, 1994). Throughout this research study, however, it is assumed there is nothing wrong with Latinos. This research is not meant to correct any problems. Rather, the Latino voice needs to be heard and understood.

Another assumption that was made throughout this study was that all cultural groups have needs. Banks (1988) believes there are five key elements that are useful in understanding the needs of a cultural group:

1. The values and behavioral styles of a culture serve as a primary factor that distinguishes one group from another.
2. Language and dialects play an important role in forming concepts.
3. A group's awareness of their culture as unique and distinct from other cultures or microcultures within a society.
4. The degree to which an individual identifies with his or her culture can be fostered by an exposure to positive role models from the culture.
5. Nonverbal communication can be very powerful in understanding the student's culture, perspectives, world views and frames of reference.

The research was approached with the belief that Latinos come from a mixture of different cultures that can influence a student's educational attainment. Latinos aspire to go to college to receive an education and be successful, just like any other cultural group (Lopez, 2000). However, Latinos have additional barriers that contribute to whether this success can be attained. There is an educational isolation going on for many minorities, and the Latino community is being hit hardest through this isolation. Cultural environment, ethnic identity, acculturation, and social support

are important constructs to consider when dealing with Latino students (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000).

Many studies have suggested that Latinos have a variety of different cultures and multiple experiences. Being a third generation Mexican American, the researcher believed that the Latinos' cultural identity and ethnicity played a key role in shaping the experiences of the Latino student. It didn't matter if a student was a United States citizen, had his or her green card, or was an illegal alien.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Demographics of Latinos

The Latino population in the United States is increasing rapidly and is projected to surpass all other minority groups in this country by 2015. By this year, Latinos should comprise about fourteen percent of the general U.S. population (Jasinski, 2000; U.S. Census, 2000). In fact, Latinos could represent nearly twenty-five percent of the US population by 2050, if all trends continue (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2000). The Advisory Commission's Report (2000) further states, "Ensuring that Hispanics achieve educational excellence is in the interest of all Americans. Our top priority for higher education must be to ensure that Hispanic students can succeed in college." This statement provides a major challenge to the college and universities in the United States.

In the 2000 U.S. Census, 12.5 percent of the population was classified as Hispanic (Latino) divided into Mexicans at 7.3 percent, Puerto Ricans at 1.2 percent, Cubans at .4 percent, and other Latinos at 3.6 percent. Within the Latino population, Mexicans composed 58.5 percent of all Latinos, Puerto Ricans were 9.6 percent, Cubans were 3.5 percent, and other Latinos were 28.4 percent. This is an increase of

the total Latino population of 57.9 percent over 1990 (35.3 million in 2000, 22.4 million in 1990, and 14.6 million in 1980). It is also interesting to note that three states (California, Texas, and New York) have nearly two-thirds of the total Latino population in the nation (Chapa & Valencia, 1993).

Hispanic/Latino Identification

Hispanics or Latinos are not a race. They are not a nation or a state. They do not necessarily share the same first language. Latinos are a diverse mix of new migrants and later-generation descendants who still feel affiliated with the ethnic category. They are an ethnicity. However, there are so many differences in each subgroup of Latinos. They can be any religion and any citizenship status, from undocumented to US citizen by birth, and may come from any of over twenty distinct national histories (Arbona & Novy, 1991; Fox, 1996; Gracia & DeGreiff, 2000; Huddy & Virtanen, 1995; Jones-Correa & Leal, 1996; Kane, 1998; Rodriguez & Guido-DiBrito, 2000; Trueba, 1999; Vazquez & Ramirez-Krodel, 1989).

Latinos are actually a range of different peoples. There are Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Salvadorans, Colombians, etc. (Jones-Correa & Leal, 1996). Some individuals use hyphenated names to illustrate their ethnicity (Cuban-Americans and Mexican-Americans). The identification goes further, with individuals of Mexican descent calling themselves Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, and Mexicano. Puerto Ricans may refer to themselves as Nuyoricans (New York Puerto

Rican who speaks English only) or Boriquas (Vazquez & Ramirez-Krodel, 1989). The Latino exists because people share certain cultural commonalities (Padilla, 1990).

The Hispanic population in the United States is heterogeneous in nature. It is comprised of various groups of people with distinct backgrounds. These groups of people represent different historical, economic, political, and racial perspectives. There is no single label that adequately describes the ethnically diverse groups that make up the Latino population. It is unrealistic and inappropriate to assume that all Latinos hold a standard set of values and beliefs. There are, however, certain values and beliefs that can be found among each of the Latino cultures (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Matute-Bianchi, 1986). As Maldonado (2000) states:

To be Hispanic will not be limited to immigrants, the Spanish-speaking, or the Spanish-surnamed. It certainly will not be limited to those who are Catholic. Ethnicity is a matter of individual and group identity; it refers to a sense of peoplehood and identification with the people. (p. 117)

Latinos can differ in socioeconomic status, generational status, education attainment, race, and immigration status (Arbona & Novy, 1991; Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993; Jasinski, 2000; Jones-Correa & Leal, 1996; Vazquez & Ramirez, 1989). There is evidence that subgroups of Latino students differ in demographic characteristics that are related to academic success as well (Mestre & Robinson, 1983; Ortiz, 1986). Although Latinos may feel loyalty and camaraderie among the Latino community, they frequently perceive themselves as less similar to members of other

Latino subgroups. They do, however, see major differences between the Latino community and Whites. Latinos are like other groups, with their own identities and their own economic, political, and personal realities. The Spanish language and culture are similar to all Latinos, but even that has diverse facets because many who call themselves Latino don't even speak the Spanish language (Flores, 2000; Huddy & Virtanen, 1995; Vazquez & Ramirez, 1989).

Because self-identification as a Latino is voluntary and at times inconsistent, this presents an important research challenge. At most universities, the distinctions between Latino subgroups are ignored when data are collected on ethnicity. Research often aggregates Latinos from various subgroups into one category in order to establish the idea of a homogeneous ethnic group (Arbona & Novy, 1991; Harrington & O'Shea, 1980; Jasinski, 200; Jones-Correa & Leal, 19960; Mestre, 1981; Mestre & Robinson, 1983; Oboler, 1995). This ethnic lumping into one group (using one group such as Cubans to represent the Latino community) can be very misleading and can further perpetuate the stereotypes of Latinos. This illustrates the need to consider the diversity of Latino groups when compared with both each other and with the White non-Hispanic majority when conducting research. Latino or Hispanic identification should be broken down into Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban-origin, Central and South American origin and "other Hispanics" subcategories, which serve as the basis for more information (Flores, 2000). As Frisby and Lorenzo-Luaces (2000) state:

...a more useful study for understanding the social cognitions of Hispanics in judging cultural similarities or differences would be to involve participants from a highly specific Hispanic subgroup(s), as

well as to redesign fictitious portraits to include representation from a wider variety of specific Hispanic subgroups, information related to recency of immigration to the United States, educational levels of parents in families, portraits representing products of interethnic marriages, and information related to religious affiliation. (p. 199)

Hispanic or Latino?

Is it Hispanic or Latino? There is no consensus as to the most acceptable term to use. There are many labels used to describe Latinos and Hispanics (Chicanos, Spanish, Latin-American, Spanish-speaking, Spanish origin, Spanish-surname, and Spanish persons). Attention should be given to the people's own affirmations of their ancestry and their preference for whatever cultural attributes they choose to embrace (Marin & Marin, 1991; Vazquez & Ramirez, 1989).

Depending upon the area of the country, Latino and Hispanic can have very different meanings. One phrase, "We are Mexicans, Chicanos, Mexican-Americans, Raza, Hispanic, but never Latino." can be commonly heard from the Southwest region of the United States. In the Midwest, statements like, "...Hispanic is basically a sellout, *un vendido*," or "Anyone who calls himself Hispanic or refers to our community as Hispanic, just wants to be an American and forget about our roots" can be heard (Flores, 2000).

The U.S. Census Bureau has made several changes to the terms Hispanic and Latino. The first time any form of Hispanic or Latino appeared on the census was in 1930 when Mexican was included as a race (it has not appeared alone since). Prior to 1940, people were asked to report if Spanish was their "mother tongue." Between

1940 and 1970, information was reported on persons of Spanish surname. Starting in 1970, the census included a question specifically on Hispanic origin, although it was only asked on a sample version of the questionnaire (less than 5 percent). Respondents receiving the sample questionnaire were asked what their descent was (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American). The 1990 and 1980 censuses asked people if they were of “Spanish/Hispanic origin or descent” and if so, to choose Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other Spanish/Hispanic. The term “Latino” appeared on the census for the first time in 2000.

The term Hispanic actually has a political origin. It officially was used for the first time in 1968 when President Johnson declared National Hispanic Heritage Week to begin the week of September 15-16 (Vazquez & Ramirez, 1989). Since that time, Hispanic has been used to identify all Spanish-speaking groups as culturally homogeneous (Fox, 1996; Oboler, 1995). Hispanic is typically used to mean a person from, or with ancestry from, a Spanish-speaking country. Hispanic is any person who either speaks Spanish as a first language, or had some ancestor who did, even if the individual speaks only English. The term Hispanic frequently also encompasses any person who has a Spanish surname (Fox, 1996; Vazquez & Ramirez, 1989).

In this study, use of the term Latino is focused on the social uses of the term in promoting the interests and concerns of the Spanish-speaking collective (or community) and not on whether a person happens to speak Spanish. Latinos are more of a population rather than a community. This is used to identify, not only social or cultural unity and diversity, but consumer markets and voting blocs (Flores, 2000).

The Latino subgroups can include immigrants, descendants of some of the original inhabitants of this continent, American citizens, English and Spanish speakers, people of different national origins, those who identify closely with their ethnic heritage, and those who do not (Gutierrez, Yeakley & Ortega, 2000).

Latino Culture and Values

As with any cultural group, there is a great diversity of values and beliefs within the Latino community. According to Fanon (1963), "A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence" (p. 188). Even though Latinos are not from a specific nation, the description by Fanon of a national culture can still apply. There are certain values that are common throughout all Latino groups and there are specific values within each group. The literature indicates that traditional Latino families place overriding importance on the extended family, gender roles, the importance and pride of the Latino community and culture, and age-based authority, but tend to place little value on independence, achievement, and deferred gratification (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Niemann & Romero, 1999). It is also essential to recognize that these cultural attributes are tendencies, not absolutes, and are not rigidly fixed to any one individual, family, or Latino group (Matute-Bianchi, 1986).

Family

Latinos tend to be more traditional than other ethnic groups when dealing with families. They identify with their immediate and extended families. The men are expected to work while the women care for the children. Children are normally the main focus in the household (Gutierrez, Yeakley & Ortega, 2000). Because of this, the demands and needs of the family and extended family frequently take precedence over the needs and desires of the individual. This is referred to as “familismo” or “familialism.” Latinos also like to keep physically and emotionally close families. Generally, those who are oldest receive the most respect (Marin & Marin, 1990; Niemann & Romero, 1999).

Latinos often have strong feelings of loyalty and support. Because of this loyalty, family influence can have a great effect on educational decisions. This closeness of family influence affects a Latino student’s desire to attend college, where the student selects to go, and even how that student lives while at the school (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Suarez & Fowers, 1997). In fact, maintaining that closeness with the family often is one of the major influences on whether the Latino student stays or leaves higher education (Hurtado, 1994).

Gender Roles

The Latino male and female generally have traditional role expectations. The male is expected to support the family while the female tends to the family’s needs

(Gutierrez, Yeakley & Ortega, 2000; Niemann & Romero, 2000). In fact, at an early age, males generally assist in the financial support of their families as soon as they are able. Hernandez and Morales (1999) states in his research, “Valdez and Coltrane indicated that men and women in Latino households ‘live in separate worlds’, each living their roles as unevenly distributed yet accepting this distribution in distinct ways.” (p. 46) Women, because of their duties in handling family matters, are usually the main support in the family and tend to maintain the ties with parents, children, and extended family members (Rodriguez & Bernstein, 1995).

Because of these “traditional” gender roles, Latinas tend to have a more difficult time attending school and adjusting to college life. When Latinas excel in school, there may be conflicted feelings or internalized guilt for having passed when so many Latina peers have either dropped out or failed in school (Medina & Luna, 2000). Ginorio and Huston (2001) state that females also receive additional pressures from males, specifically boyfriends and husbands, that make it difficult to attend college. The males do not want their girlfriends or wives to be more educated than themselves. The females may also receive pressures from their Latina friends who believe that to be educated means to lose who they are and that they begin to act white.

Community

The Latino community is a complement to the family. The network of peers and extended relatives can be viewed as an extension of their close relationships

(Echeverriarza, 1991; Hurtado, 1994). In fact, next to the family, peers normally provide the most support to the student. Culturally, there is a need to develop relationships with others in the community.

A basic concept within the Latino community is the value of allocentrism, a sense of identity and commitment to collectives and groups, rather than the individual. This is associated with high levels of conformity, mutual empathy, willingness to sacrifice for the welfare of the group, trust among members of the group, and high levels of personal interdependence. The collective focus is on group harmony, with the avoidance of conflict and confrontation. This is referred to as "simpatía," which emphasizes the need for behaviors that promote pleasant and nonconflicting social relationships (Gutierrez, Yeakley & Ortega, 2000; Marin & Marin, 1991).

A time to celebrate is essential in the Latino community. One of the most honored traditions is the time when a Latina becomes of age. It has different names, Cuban (quince), and Puerto Rican (quinceañeras), but the meaning is similar. This is when a young woman who turns 15 (or 16) makes her formal debut into society, a rite second only to her wedding.

Religion

Religion can play an important role in the Latino's life. Although it is a personal matter, it can also be a way of maintaining one's cultural identity. In fact, religion has played a key role in shaping the Latino culture. As Maldonado (2000) states, "Marriage and Baptism shaped social relations. Religious values, teachings, and

rituals shaped personal worldviews and individual and social behavior. The family, community, and society were all Catholic, which provided a unified socioreligious cultural system” (p. 100). Even though most Latinos identify with the Catholic faith, other religious practices are present, such as Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians (Heyck, 1994).

Religion is viewed as much more personal rather than institutional. Although church is a means of connecting to the community, most Latinos practice their faith outside of the church (Heyck, 1994; Maldonado, 2000).

Subgroup Cultural Differentiation

Cuban

Most Cuban Americans were predominantly political refugees, largely immigrants coming to the United States in two waves. The first large group came in the late 1950's. Most of these Cubans were upper middle and upper class and had a high level of education. Most were white collar professionals. The second wave came in the early 1980's. These immigrants tended to be from the lower class and had lower educational levels. Despite additional challenges, this wave did have advantages because of the strong communities established by the first wave (Pérez, 1986; Vazquez & Ramirez, 1989). The highest concentration of Cubans (mostly from the first wave of immigrants) is in the southern part of Florida. Most Cubans settled in

Miami, establishing their own communities separate from the mainstream American culture. The other concentration of Cubans is in southern California.

Cuban Americans are frequently viewed as the “exception” in Latino culture. Their accomplishments are attributed to diligence, hard work, and an established network of business and families. Because of the higher economic and educational background established by the first wave of immigrants, they were able to build a tremendous support network. Cuban Americans tend to achieve greater success and attain higher levels of education than any other Latino group (Arbona & Novy, 1991; Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Ginorio & Huston, 2001; Ortiz, 1986).

Cuban Americans tend to value linearity over individuality, supporting the belief that family comes first (Pérez, 1986; Suarez & Fowers, 1997). Germand (1996) states that most Cuban American families still maintain many of the traditional values such as: (a) dating supervision by an older brother or going on a double date; (b) marriage customs such as being able to marry only another Cuban American or at least someone within the community; and (c) the family structure, always obeying elders and respecting authority (p. 80).

Mexican American

Mexican Americans make up almost sixty percent of the total Latino population. For many Mexicans in the 1800's, immigration was not a conscious choice; rather, the border moved on them. They were given a choice to become US citizens or remain Mexican citizens with resident alien status. Most chose to become

US citizens, but largely lost their rights anyway through practices of racism and segregation. Because of these lost rights, few Mexicans received any type of formal education in the 1800's and through the early part of the 1900's as well (Marin & Marin, 1991; Vazquez & Ramirez, 1989).

There are generally four Mexican-descent identities found in school: (a) recent Mexican immigrant or Mexito, (b) Mexican orient, (c) Mexican American, and (d) Chicano. A fifth identity, Cholo, meaning gang affiliated, is mentioned, but for the purpose of this study was not used (Matute-Bianchi, 1986). Individuals of various Mexican identities do not define what it is to behave "Mexican"; similarly, each group had its own definition of what being ethnic means and how to behave accordingly (Matute-Bianchi, 1986). Third- or fourth-generation students who might not be familiar with Mexican culture and traditions and who might prefer to speak English rather than Spanish may nevertheless identify with their Mexican heritage (Arbona, Flores, & Novy, 1995).

Religion has been an influential factor in the Mexican culture. The Catholic faith is the most prominent, with over 70 percent of the Mexican population identifying themselves as such. Religious celebrations have become traditions over the years for many Mexican Americans. Celebrations such as the Day of the Dead, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Day of the Three Kings are some of the more popular religious celebrations.

One of the most popular celebrations in the United States for Mexican Americans is from a footnote in Mexican history. Cinco de mayo is a day most

Mexican Americans celebrate as a time to honor Hispanic heritage. Most Whites, and even other Latinos, assume the celebration to be Mexican Independence Day, which is September 16. Cinco de mayo is a day when Mexican Americans commemorate a battle in 1862 when peasants rose against the French Army. This battle and celebration represents the pride and respect Mexican Americans have achieved in the United States.

Puerto Rican

Puerto Ricans are United States citizens, a frequently misunderstood fact. Being Puerto Rican is a matter of citizenship and not of nationality. Puerto Ricans are not subject to immigration laws, but because of their linguistic and cultural difference from the majority, they are treated as immigrants. In 1917, Puerto Ricans were granted US citizenship. This marked the beginning of a major migration to the US, most specifically New York City (Marin & Marin, 1991; Pérez y González, 2000).

Although American citizens, many Puerto Ricans do not feel fully American (Flores-González, 1999). They do not view themselves as immigrants, either. One advantage Puerto Ricans have over other Latino cultures is the ability to go back and forth easily from their homeland. This enables Puerto Ricans to have more formal ties with their cultural roots, which has a mixture of African, Caribbean, European and Spanish traditions (Pérez y González, 2000; Vazquez & Ramirez, 1989). However, in education, that advantage comes with a price. Vazquez states that since the late 1960's, school performance for Puerto Ricans has been on the decline. As Puerto Ricans move into the 21st century, they are no better off (Vazquez & Ramirez, 1989).

Music plays an important role in the Puerto Rican culture. In fact, it is considered one of the most important symbols of Puerto Rican identity (Manuel, 1994). Typical Puerto Rican music is rooted in a mixture of Spanish, African, and Taino (a subgroup of American Indians in northeastern South America) cultures.

The religious practice of the Puerto Rican people is varied. Unlike Mexicans and Cubans, Catholicism is not the prominent religion. While the Catholic faith has an influence, another major presence is Protestant (Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian) (Maldonado, 2000).

The main language spoken by Puerto Ricans is Spanish, but there are African and South American influences within the dialect. Because of these influences, the language is somewhat different from the way other Latinos may speak (Pérez y González, 2000).

Central and South American

Central Americans in America are largely from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. These individuals usually leave for either political reasons or are in search of better employment (Vazquez & Ramirez-Krodel, 1989). South Americans tend to be from wealthier families with high levels of education, such as Colombia and Brazil (Marin & Marin, 1991). Both Central and South American groups are heterogeneous, encompassing professionals, white-collar employees, blue-collar workers, and political refugees trying to attain a better education for themselves or for their children.

Those individuals from Central and South America who attended high school in the United States are more likely to graduate from high school, be more prepared for college, and have higher aspirations than all other Latino groups (Gray & Vernez, 1996). The major problem with students when they first arrive is the language barrier. The longer the student is in the educational system, the less language has an impact on their achievement. Because of this barrier, most Latinos are placed in a lower level grade, no matter what their skill (Gray & Vernez, 1996).

Ethnic Cultural Identity

Acculturation and ethnic identity are two variables that are critical in understanding Latino students' cultural orientation (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Phinney, 1990; Torres, 1999). Most research on cultural identity has concentrated on factors such as self-esteem and stress that could be affected by acculturation (Hall & Rowan, 2001; Harter, 1993; Hurtado, 1994; Phinney, 1990; ; Phinney & Cantu, 1997; Porter & Washington, 1993; Smedley, Myers & Harrell, 1993).

Ethnic Identity

The most accurate measure of ethnic identity can be developed by asking a cross-section of group members to discuss, in their own words, what it means to them to be members of a particular ethnic group (Niemann & Romero, 1999). Most research on ethnic identity has been with European Whites and Blacks. Very little has been

done with Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans (Phinney, 1990; Phinney & Cantu, 1997).

Racial Identity Development

Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1993) presented a review of numerous studies on racial identity development (p. 25). From the models presented, an overall model emerged that embodies the principles of each model. Milville and Helms (1996) used *this general model as part of a study that explored identity with Latinos and Latinas*. They described four stages an individual would go through to achieve his or her own racial identity. Helms (1990) provided clarity for each of the stages, which are included in the following descriptions. The four stages are: (a) Conformity (Preencounter), which is when an individual internalizes, is unaware or denies the Latino culture in favor of the dominant culture; (b) Introspection (Encounter), which is when an individual becomes aware of the Latino culture and begins to devalue the dominant culture; (c) Immersion, which is when an individual embraces the Latino culture and rejects everything non-Latino; and (d) Awareness (Internalization), when an individual appreciates and is aware of both the Latino culture and dominant culture.

Ruiz (1990) developed an ethnic identity development model specific to Latinos. Although similar to other models, Ruiz believed that they did not address the issues particular to Latinos. He presented five stages in which the individual could develop his or her identity. The stages include: (a) casual; (b) cognitive; (c) consequence; (d) working through; and (e) successful resolution. Ruiz (1990) believed

that his model fully described the contributing factors of identity conflict. He also stressed the need by a Latino to be expressive through the language.

Ethnic Identity Development Model

Phinney (1993) created a model that is similar to other models on racial identity (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993; Cross, 1971; Helms, 1990; Sue & Sue, 1990). Phinney's (1993) ethnic identity model centers on the process of ethnic identity formation by looking at the "way in which individuals come to understand the implications of their ethnicity and make decisions about its role in their lives, regardless of the extent of their ethnic involvement" (p. 64).

The model is framed as a continuous line in which a student can move through three stages of ethnic identity development: (a) the unexamined ethnic identity, which relates to an individual who tends to accept the dominant culture's values and attitudes; (b) ethnic identity search/moratorium, which happens when an individual is forced to evaluate their own ethnic identity; and (c) ethnic identity achievement, which occurs when an individual has a clear sense of his or her own ethnic identity (Torres, 1999, 2003). Most individuals in the unexamined ethnic identity stage with family support advance to ethnic identity search and then achievement. Those in the achievement stage rarely digress (Phinney, 1993; Torres, 1999, 2003).

Acculturation

Acculturation is a change which occurs when one culture is in continuous contact with a more dominant culture (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). There are three types of acculturation models: (a) linear, which assumes that when an individual identifies more with the dominant culture, a lot of the ethnic identity is lost; (b) two-dimensional, which recognizes the individual's relationship with both the ethnic culture and the dominant culture, which can also be called a bicultural model; and (c) multidimensional, which recognizes that when the two-dimensional exists, the loss of ethnic traits varies (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Phinney, 1990; Torres, 1999).

Bicultural Orientation Model

Torres (1999) based his model on the relationship between acculturation and ethnic identity due to the nature of the two factors. Torres (1999) believed that Latinos could thrive in both their own culture as well as the majority White culture. Torres speculated that an individual with high levels of both acculturation and ethnic identity could function competently in both the Latino and White cultures. If an individual had low acculturation and high ethnic identity, that individual would prefer to operate within the Latino culture and vice versa; where the ethnic identity is low and acculturation high, the individual would prefer the White culture (Torres, 1999, 2003).

The Bicultural Orientation Model supports the concept that Latinos do not have to assimilate into the White culture on the college campus in order to achieve a

degree. Latinos students are able to deal with two cultures in college, their own subgroup culture and the White dominant culture (Laden, 1998, 1999; Rendon, 1993). *Biculturalism allows students to retain their Latino values while selectively incorporating some of the dominant White culture values (Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1993; Rodriguez & Guido-DiBrito, 2000). Suarez and Fowers (1997) state,*

Biculturalism reflects a form of cultural flexibility that allows an individual to access social support and meaning in two different cultural contexts. A bicultural individual is potentially able to experience belonging in both cultures. (p. 493)

Cultural Orientation Model

Keefe and Padilla (1987) believe in a multidimensional model of cultural change. There are three primary components of the Cultural Orientation Model: cultural awareness, which is a person's knowledge of cultural traits; ethnic social orientation, which refers to the preference for ethnicity of associates and types of foods; and ethnic loyalty, which refers to a person's preference for one culture over another culture (Arbona et al., 1991). Each component is related to personal and social preference, ethnic identity, and/or attitudes toward cultural traditions, and thus has implications for relationship and education values for Latinos. The components of cultural orientation are considered aspects of acculturation (Arbona, 1991). However, most acculturation measures primarily yield information relative to language preference and usage, and assume a linear model of cultural displacement (Keefe & Padilla, 1987).

Keefe and Padilla (1987) believe this model allows for the possibility that people may maintain their ethnic identity, yet not speak any Spanish. They also contend that Latinos with high levels of cultural awareness may be very cognizant of traditional gender roles and behaviors. An example of this is women prioritize marriage and family life over individual career goals. Women don't see education or professional careers as being options for their life.

Ethnic social orientation decreases between the first and second generation and appears to level out fairly early, so that even third and fourth generations tend to associate with their ethnic group (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). Keefe and Padilla (1987) also state that high ethnic loyalty Latinos are likely to be very sensitive to out-group discrimination and negative perception of their ethnic group. This can be perceived as a high risk factor for Latinos and their decisions to attain a college degree (Niemann & Romero, 2000). Cultural Awareness seems to decrease from the first to the fourth generation, while Ethnic Loyalty remains stable from the second through the fourth generation. An example is a third- or fourth-generation student who might not be familiar with Mexican culture and traditions, and who might prefer to speak English rather than Spanish, may identify with their Mexican heritage (Arbona & Novy, 1991; Jones-Correa & Leal, 1996).

Retention Theories and Models

There have been many studies on retention and attrition in higher education that have led to student theories trying to explain the reasons behind students staying or leaving college. However, there are two models that are the most comprehensive frameworks referred to through most literature reviews: Tinto's Student Integration model (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993) and Bean's Student Attrition model (Bean, 1980, 1985). While the intention of this study is not to test the theory of retention, the information is relevant.

Student Integration Model

The student integration model is the connection between an individual's motivation, commitment, and academic ability and the institution's academic and social characteristics. Tinto's (1975) model stipulates that it is the interaction between the student's commitment to the goal of college completion and the student's commitment to the institution that determines whether or not the individual will remain in school. The lower an individual's commitment to the institution, the more likely that student will drop out. Tinto (1975) explains, "Individuals may decide to drop out from college in order to invest their time and energies in alternative forms of activity even though their experiences in college may be satisfactory" (p. 98). This can be one explanation of why Latinos have such low retention rates.

According to Tinto (1975), there are two major predictors for retention, the student's background characteristics and the student's interactions and commitment with the institutional culture. The background characteristics consist of three areas: (a) Family backgrounds – One component is the social status of the student. The more affluent the student's family, the better chances are the student will be successful in college. Another component is the parents' educational background. The more educated the parent, the more likely the student will attend and complete college. Also, the quality of relationship between the parent and student and the interest shown by the parent is a major factor for student retention. The neighborhoods and communities in which the student was raised may also influence the student's reasons for attending and finishing college. The more support the student receives from external sources, the more the student will complete college; (b) Individual attributes – The student's gender, race, ethnicity, and general expectations are all components to this area. The ability to do the work is one of the most influential factors in determining if a student is successful in college. Also, the educational expectations of both the student and extended family can be a major factor as well; and (c) Pre-college experiences – The high school can have a major impact on the student's future in college. If the student is academically prepared, coming from a college preparation-based school, the student will more likely succeed and obtain a degree. However, if the schooling is poor or the student is not placed in college preparation courses, the student is less likely to attend college. Also, what the student is involved with during

the high school years can influence the student's attitudes towards being successful in college.

The institutional integration is the combination of the student's experiences with the academic integration and the social aspects of college life. Academic integration is separated into two components, grade performance and intellectual development. Grade performance is based on how the student achieves in class. This is part of the educational system that determines academically if the student will succeed (graduate) or be sent home. Intellectual development is based more on what the student perceives he or she has learned. Although the college does not recognize this as part of academic performance, intellectual knowledge may lead to a greater commitment to the institution. Social integration is formed "through informal peer group associations, semi-formal extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty and administrative personnel within the college" (Tinto, 1975, p. 107). With this in mind, the student's daily formal and informal interactions with other persons in both the academic and social areas of the college influence the student's decision to remain or leave the institution.

Tinto (1975) contends that when a student has high levels of academic and social integration, the student is committed to the institution, which may lead to an increased desire to stay in college. He further speculates that "integration into the academic system of the college most directly affects goal commitment, whereas behaviors in the social system most directly relate to a person's institutional commitment" (p. 110).

Davalos, Chavez and Guardiola (1999) support Tinto's belief that the more a student can adapt to the dominant or college culture and understand the expectations, the more successful the student will be. However, Tierney (1992, 1999) contends that to follow Tinto's model completely, students must abandon their cultural heritage in order to be successful. They must assimilate into the majority culture on the college campus. This may make the transition to college life more difficult for minority students because they will have to learn new cultural expectations along with the usual adjustments most students make. Tierney (1999) speculates that when minority college students are able to affirm their own cultural identities as well as the dominant culture on campus, their chances for graduation increase.

Student Attrition Model

The Student Attrition Model is grounded in the same concept as employees in the workplace. Bean (1980) speculates that both students and employees leave for similar reasons. Harvey-Smith (2002) explains that the model "emphasizes the importance of behavioral intentions as predictors of persistence behavior. It presumes that a process shapes these intentions whereby beliefs shape attitudes, which in turn influence behavioral intents" (p. 4). The Student Attrition Model attempts to explain why college students stay or leave. This model recognizes that external factors can have a major influence on attitudes and student persistence (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993).

According to Bean (1980), the retention model includes the following variables: (a) satisfaction and institutional commitment, which relates to the level of attitude a student has in relation to the commitment to the institution; (b) organizational determinants, which relates to grade point average, belonging to clubs and organizations, the perceived quality of the institution, and the perceived value of the education; and (c) background characteristics, which relates to how pre-college experiences, such as grades and activities in high school, and educational goals interact with the college environment. Bean (1980) contends that if the student: (a) goes to a college with adequate support, finances, and solid academic background, and (b) does well within the classroom by receiving adequate grades and becomes involved with extracurricular activities, then the student will have a high level of satisfaction and have an increased level of institutional commitment. However, Bean (1985) also recognizes that external factors can have a major effect on the student's attitude towards remaining in college.

While there are differences between the two models, there are several similarities. These commonalities, as stated by Cabrera, Nora and Castaneda (1993), include:

1. Both models regard persistence as the result of a complex set of interactions over time;
2. Pre-college characteristics affect how well the student would subsequently adjust to the institution; and
3. Persistence is affected by the successful match between the student and the institution. (p. 125)

Cabrera, Nora and Castaneda (1993) also stated that both models may resemble each other in several of the organizational factors, such as course and academic integration, and commitments to the institution, such as institutional commitment, institutional fit, and quality.

Nontraditional Student Attrition Model

Bean and Metzner (1985) studied nontraditional students to illustrate that the current theories on student retention did not apply to this type of student. They stipulated that nontraditional students weren't as institutionally committed as traditional students were and were not involved with as many extracurricular activities. The traditional models of student retention centered on the fact that social integration had a major impact on whether a student stayed in college or not. They felt that the external environment had a much greater impact on the retention of nontraditional students than traditional students.

Bean and Metzner (1985) theorized that there are four variables that affect student retention: (a) background, which relates to high school experiences, gender, ethnicity, and educational goals; (b) academic or institution, which relates to grades, advisement, and study habits; (c) environment, which relates to finances, family responsibilities, work responsibilities, and outside support; and (d) attitude, which relates to goal commitment, satisfaction of course work, and general outlook on college. The major difference between this model and others is that the environmental variables are the most influential factors in whether a student stays or leaves college:

“for non traditional students, environmental support compensates for weak academic support, but academic support will not compensate for weak environmental support” (Bean & Metzner, 1985, p. 492).

Barriers and Factors Related to Educational Attainment

Ideologies at the institutional and individual level continue to present barriers to recognizing and meeting the needs of the new American college student (Dey & Hurtado, 1995). For the Latino student, there are many barriers contributing to the academic failures in higher education. Latinos are usually at a disadvantage economically, socially, and educationally, and stressors may differ from those encountered by the mainstream (Hall & Rowan, 2001). These stressors may include perceived racial/ethnic tensions in environments where they do not feel valued by the faculty and administration as well as having greater negative influences on college attendance (Hurtado et al., 1994; Jasinski, 2000). Even more, Latinas have additional issues because of the cultural stigma of the female prior to entering college and family constraints once they arrive at school. The transition to college life for the Latino is also generally more difficult than for White students (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Rodriguez & Guido-DeBrito, 2000; Tinto, 1987). Because of these difficulties, Latinos are challenged to define and understand who they are as members of racial/ethnic groups, maintain their cultural values and identity, and negotiate the university culture and environment.

There are many factors that affect Latino student success or failure at the university level. These include: (a) financial support; (b) cultural acculturation and integration; (c) academic preparation; (d) family support; and (e) perceptions of university support (Astin, 1985; Gutierrez, Yeakley, & Ortega, 2000; Hall & Rowan, 2001; Rodriguez & Guido-DiBrito, 2000; Tinto, 1993). Explanations regarding the failure of Latino youth to attend higher education institutions have tended to focus on personal attributes and organizational characteristics.

Financial

The socioeconomic status of the family is an important determinant in predicting the educational attainment of Latino students in postsecondary education (Jasinski, 2000; Simpson, 2001). According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the average financial income of Latino students is significantly lower than that of Non-Latino white students. The gap between Latinos and Whites is considerable, with \$29,400 for White families compared to \$15,800 for Latino families. Of all the Latino sub-groups generally, Puerto Ricans remain the poorest. Mexicans are next, with Cubans reporting the highest income (Arbona & Novy, 1991; Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Perez & Salazar, 1993; U.S. Census, 2000; Vazquez & Ramirez-Krodel, 1989). Because Latinos have fewer resources as a family, everyone in the family needs to contribute. Students place a high value on financial matters and how they affect the family. The Latino students, usually male, are urged to pursue college majors that produce immediate results, rather

than either receiving degrees that lead to less paying jobs or continuing on for graduate work (Rendon, 1993).

Latinos may believe it is their obligation to contribute to the family income and are more likely to be employed full-time while attending college, causing greater levels of stress associated with financial concerns (Canabal, 1995; Garcia, 2000; Hurtado, 1994; Perna, 2000; Quintana et al., 1991; Ramirez, 1993). The Latino family realizes the cost of paying tuition at a university may mean not being able to purchase a home or sacrificing other basic needs for the price of sending one member of the family to college.

Acculturation

Latinos go through various stages of acculturation from traditional sub-group culture to the dominant White culture. The degree of acculturation or biculturalism has been correlated to the level of stress and adjustment difficulties encountered on the campus (Hall & Rowan, 2001). Researchers lack a clear understanding of how the variety of collegiate activities (mainstream and culturally related) may contribute to a student's sense of membership in the college community. Participation in mainstream organizations alone does not enhance the Latino student's experience or support structure (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Laden, 1999).

Most Latinos experience some form of social segregation and possibly discrimination while on the traditional college campus. The students need to have the respect and affirmation of their cultural differences. Researchers found that white

students interpreted ethnic group clustering as racial segregation, whereas minority students tended to view this behavior as a method of cultural support within a larger unsupportive environment (Loo & Rolison, 1986). Even within their own culture and sub-cultures, Latinos can be socially segregated. For example, even though Mexican American males may acculturate more rapidly than the females, they are more likely to be discouraged by friends from succeeding in education for fear of moving over to the "other side" (Lopez, 1995; Suarez & Fowers, 1997).

Academic Preparation

Latino students continue to enter school later, leave school earlier, and receive proportionately fewer high school diplomas and college degrees than other Americans (Ortiz & Gonzales, 2000). Although a report from the Illinois Board of Higher Education (2001) indicated that college participation rates for Blacks and Latinos in Illinois have risen over recent years, Latinos are still less likely to have college prep courses in high school. There may be less encouragement given to Latino students to excel in test scores before entering college. Thus, Latino students may have a more difficult time being admitted into college and receiving the scholarships necessary to stay (Canabal, 1995; Rodriguez, 1996). While a student may have the desire to attend college, other academic and cultural factors may inhibit their enrollment. Because their preparation is regularly inadequate, Latinos are often channeled into two-year colleges with limited resources and consequently fall prey to high attrition rates that

are prevalent in those institutions (Darden, Bagaka & Li, 1997; Erlach, 2000; Hurtado & Gauvin, 1997; Jasinski, 2000).

Another issue related to academic background is the segregation of Latinos in the secondary education system. Many first-generation Latinos are either bilingual or know very little English. Because of this, Latino students are generally placed in low academic tracks, limiting educational opportunities (Bennett, 1999; Casanova, 1992; Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Thompson, 2000). Those fortunate Latinos who do succeed and make it to higher education are seen as having exceptional skills and have higher self-esteem than those who do not continue on (Hall & Rowan, 2001). Latinos also have different learning styles, with a preference for more collaboration and personal feedback. The Latino student tends to thrive when a personal relationship is established with others and normally will discuss personal items before admitting they do not know something. This is a contradiction to the more impersonal, direct approach the secondary educational system imposes (Sanchez, 2000).

Parent/Family Support

The importance of family support and structure are highly valued within the Latino community. Latinos usually have the extended family, including grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins to assist in raising the children. There is also evidence that parental involvement increases the student's educational achievement, regardless of the cultural background of the family (Flaxman & Inger, 1992).

Research has shown that a parent's educational attainment can have an impact on a student's attendance at college. Latinos have the lowest level for father's and mother's education compared to non-Latinos and are the least likeliest to have had a parent attend some college (Leppel, 2001; Strage, 2000). If a parent has attended a college or university and graduated, the student is more likely to attend and be successful in college. Because Latinos lag in educational attainment, most first-generation Latinos have a limited knowledge of the American college system and are likely to be the first in their families to attend post-secondary education (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Hurtado & Gauvin, 1997; Jasinski, 2000; Rendon, 1993; Strage, 2000). Also, intergenerational and acculturational differences occur because younger members of a family acculturate faster than older family members (Szapocznik, Scopetta, Kurtines, and Aranalde, 1978).

Students' home culture, socioeconomic background, and familial customs, beliefs, and practices can significantly affect their goal choices and academic progress. Many Latino families distrust the school systems, believing the family has few rights and consequently never question placement or achievement scores from the schools. Within the family structure, mothers have a greater impact on whether students actually attend college than any other member in the household (Hurtado & Gauvin, 1997; Lango, 1995). Also within the family structure, the Latinas have an even more difficult time attaining an education. There has been a great deal of research on the lack of Latinas in higher education (Hernández & Morales, 1999; Ginorio & Huston, 2001; Gomez, 2001; Long & Martinez, 1994; Lopez, 1995; Medina & Luna, 2000;

Ramirez, Laurel & Rodriguez-Aguilar, 1999; Wolf-Wendel, 1998). Most of the research indicates that because of the male-dominated family structure, the females' role in the family is to take care of the younger siblings or the household and not be allowed to obtain a college degree.

Faculty/Staff

Collegiate faculty and staff members dealing with Latino students have historically limited knowledge and cultural sensitivity to Latino students. The absence of cultural knowledge on the part of most faculty, staff, and students could contribute to an unwelcome environment for Latinos (Hurtado et al., 1994; Ponterotto, Martinez, & Hayden, 1986; Rendon, 1993;).

Marginalization and alienation within the classroom can also occur because of the lack of Latino representation among students, staff, and faculty. Because of this, there are fewer mentors and role models for the Latinos (Gonzalez, 1999; Reyes & Valencia, 1993).

A study on minority-relevant stress indicated that minorities at predominantly White college campuses may have more difficulty adjusting to college due to their own perceptions of how White students and faculty have minimal expectations of the minority student in the classroom (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993). This perception leads to more self-doubt and added pressures to succeed.

Summary of Literature Review

The literature review contained a variety of perspectives on who and what a Latino is. The background information on the different uses of the terms Latino and Hispanic provided an historical perspective as to why there are still questions regarding what to call the ethnic group. Information was also provided on the Latino culture and possible subgroup differentiation. Theoretical models on ethnic identity and cultural orientation were provided to understand how Latinos might integrate their cultures into the dominant White cultures they encounter throughout their education. Three different retention models were also reviewed in order to understand some of the complexities of why Latinos remain in college. Finally, information on possible barriers Latinos may face while obtaining a college degree were provided.

All of the literature mentioned directed the need for an in-depth understanding of the Latino college student's cultural aspects of obtaining a college education. With this information, colleges and high schools could create an environment that is more conducive to the individual needs of the Latino student.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Study

This chapter provides the design for the study, the research methodology used, data collection, interview procedures, data analysis, and discussion of expected results. The purpose of this study was to examine and understand Latino College students' sub-cultures and investigate how their cultural integration could affect their retention and completion of a baccalaureate degree. Additionally, this study sought to understand the cultural factors that influence student retention.

Ambert and others have outlined five foci and goals of qualitative research: (a) qualitative research seeks depth rather than breadth; (b) qualitative research learns about how and why people behave, think, and make meaning as they do; (c) the goals of qualitative research can be situated on several levels; (d) qualitative research evokes discovery rather than verification; and (e) qualitative research continually reforms the conceptualization of the ongoing observations (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995).

Methods of Collecting Data

There are a variety of methods to collect data when conducting a qualitative study. Some of those methods include interviewing, making observations, reading past materials, making visual assessments, and personal experiences. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The observational method has the researcher observing subjects in a controlled or uncontrolled environment. There is no interaction between the researcher and the subjects. This method can be problematic for a number of reasons, including: (a) there is no method of checking with subjects for validation of observations; (b) the setting of the observation can be biased; and (c) the researcher can inadvertently bias the subjects and results by being present in the observed environment (Fontana & Frey, 1994). The reading method has the researcher interpreting written material on the subject. The major weaknesses for this method include: (a) the researcher's inability to interact with the past; and (b) the researcher interprets the dated information and could misinterpret what the author intended (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Another approach is the visual method, which is similar to the reading method. This type of research involves the use of film, video, and photography as a means of recording and documenting information. Like the reading method, major problems with the visual approaches include: (a) the researcher's inability to interact with the material; (b) the researcher interprets the information and could misinterpret what the visuals intended; and (c) the information is from the subject's point of view and could be biased (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

The personal experience approach to research reflects the opinions and meanings an individual brings to an immediate situation (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). The challenges associated with this approach include: (a) the researcher can have difficulty studying direct, lived experiences; (b) personal stories make up the experiences, which can be subject to different interpretations; and (c) there may be contradictions between the personal experiences and written history (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

Interviewing

The method of data collection utilized for this study was interviewing. Interviewing is a common method to study and understand people (Fontana & Frey, p. 361). In an interview setting, the participant is able to share stories about his or her own experiences. The interview is a method that is not designed to get answers to questions, or to test a hypothesis. Rubin and Rubin state that "Qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds. Through qualitative interviews you can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 1). Seidman (1998) also writes:

Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior. A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience. To observe a teacher, student, principal, or counselor provides access to their behavior. Interviewing allows us to put behavior in context and provides access to understanding their action. (p. 4)

The major problem associated with interviewing is that the interview can be influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer, such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Lenth, 2001).

Interviewing Types

There are three different types of interview: (a) structured, (b) semi-structured, and (c) unstructured. The structured interview is a situation in which the interviewer asks each respondent a series of pre-established questions with a limited set of response categories. There is a script which the interviewer follows from beginning to end, so there is little room for variation. The only exception may arise from an occasional open-ended question. The responses are recorded according to a pre-established coding system. All participants receive the same questions in the same order. The interviewer does not respond in any way to the participant. This method provides minimal deviation from the script in the implementation of the interview. Some drawbacks of this style of interview include: (1) poorly worded questions may lead to skewed responses; (2) the participant could give normative answers and not really respond to the questions; (3) the interviewer is poorly prepared (doesn't follow the directions, has poor communication skills); and (4) the emotional state of the participant is not taken into consideration (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

The unstructured interview is used in an attempt to understand the behavior of a group without any categorization that limits the study. There are two types of unstructured interviews, the open-ended probe questions (traditional type) and the

participant observation type. These methods are mostly used together in the field. With this method, the researcher goes to the environment where the participants are. The major drawbacks to this method include: (1) questions that are asked may not be the same for each participant; (2) the environment may not be as controlled so possible mishaps may result; and (3) because the researcher is in the field, the results may be tainted due to the researcher's very presence (Fontana & Frey, 1994)

The preferred interview method for this research was semi-structured. The semi-structured method used was a combination of the structured and unstructured interview format. The researcher has to pay attention to what the participant is saying and at times has to expand on the participant's initial response. The questions go beyond the closed-ended questions and rely more on a "flow path" of open-ended questions that have many of the questions leading to other specific questions related to the individual participant (Pawson, 1996; Seidman, 1998). The questions during the interview are made to have the participant think and remember. The structured portion of this process is that: (a) the same general questions are asked for every participant; and (b) the same format is used. By using the semi-structured method, the participant was able to elaborate on questions that he/she felt was important.

Subjects and Sample

Marin and Marin (1991) believed that when research was being conducted with Latinos, the researcher needed to understand the background of the participant to appreciate what the participant's responses were related to. This study examined only

those individuals who identified themselves as Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, or Latin Americans. Although the self-identification method did have its limitations, it was still a most useful method for research purposes. In all other respects, the process produced a sample of convenience. The sample was not selected to promote generalization of findings. The purpose of the study was to discover and explore, not to validate.

Data Collection Procedures

The survey and interview questions were piloted with four participants. A procedure and protocol was established to ensure that the research was conducted properly. Feedback was sought from this pilot on both the survey and the interview questions. After the survey and interview were completed, the researcher and piloted participants discussed each of the instruments. The piloted participants provided suggestions so the instruments could be made clearer. There was no information collected from the piloted participants, so no data was included in the study.

Prospective participants were emailed a letter outlining the purpose of the research (See Appendix A). The email was sent to several Latino organizations at major universities in the Midwest. Recipients were invited to respond by emailing the researcher. The researcher then contacted each respondent and conducted a brief interview by phone. Each participant was screened to ensure they met a set of specific requirements which included: (a) at least a junior standing in college (can also be a senior, graduate student, or recent graduate); (b) be self-identified as a Latino; (c) be

able to speak English (the interviews were conducted only in English); and (d) have completed at least a high school education in the United States. A filter of ensuring diverse sample characteristics was employed once enough participants were interviewed for that particular ethnic category. Although there has been minimal research on how many interviews should be conducted (Bacchetti, Wolf, Segal, & McCulloch, 2005), Lenth (2001) states that a good question to determine a sample size is, "What results do you expect (or hope) to see?" The number of participants was established after a pattern developed with the participants' responses.

Each interview began with the researcher outlining the purpose of the study. The participant was assured of confidentiality throughout the study. This was done so participants would be more likely to answer the questions honestly and with less hesitation (Singer & Frankel, 1982). Each participant was first asked to complete a consent form, which outlined the purpose of the study provided, information regarding the research, and instructed participants how to contact the researcher if needed (Appendix B). The form was reviewed with the participant in detail to ensure understanding. The consent form contained the following information as established by the Institutional Review Board: (a) a brief description of the research study; (b) procedural information that included interview length and language; (c) how confidentiality would be adhered to; (d) the researcher and advisor's names, telephone numbers, and email addresses; (e) the participant's voluntary status to engage in the study and the understanding that he/she was free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty; and (f) information indicating the interview was being audio-

taped and that once the study was completed the tapes would be destroyed.

After giving their consent to participate, the participant was asked to complete a questionnaire asking for demographic information (Appendix C). The questionnaire requested detailed background information on each participant, such as grade level, self-reported ethnicity, primary language, and birthplace. Information was also gathered about each participant's parents, including parents' level of education, occupation, birthplace, primary language, and income. Other questions for the participant requested the number of siblings in the family and whether any other relatives lived in the same household growing up.

The researcher conducted all of the interviews in English (Appendix D). The questions were derived from both the literature review and from the researcher's personal experiences. The questions and prompts were asked to all of the participants. The interviews were scheduled for one hour, but if the participant wanted to continue, the time was extended. All interviews were audio-taped and subsequently transcribed. The technique used for the interview was derived from the researcher's past experience as well as from a review of interview technique literature. The literature provided specific techniques and skills a researcher should use when conducting an interview. Some of the techniques and skills described include: (a) listen more, talk less; (b) follow up on what the participant says; (c) explore, don't probe; (d) ask open-ended questions; (e) follow up, don't interrupt; (f) keep participants focused and ask for concrete details; (g) tolerate silence; and (h) use an interview guide cautiously (Seidman, 1996, pp. 63-77).

The interview questions were grouped into two main sections. The first section covered the participant's experiences growing up in his/her culture as well as interactions within the family. The second section of the interview covered the participant's experiences while attending college. A main focus was placed on the participant's cultural experience while at school. Another focus was the participant's attitudes towards success and the relationship with attending college.

The interview progressed until the participants shared as much as they were willing during the session. The researcher summarized the interview with the participant, asking if there were any major points that had been missed. Once all avenues had been exhausted, the interview was concluded. The participant was given another opportunity at the end of the interview to retract or disallow any information that was provided during the interview or on the questionnaire.

Coding

Each of the interviews was transcribed into a database designed by the researcher, as suggested by the work of Miles & Huberman (1994) and Kvale (1996). Coding was the process used to establish patterns and organize the data collected from the interviews. Crittenden and Hill (1971) stated, "In general, coding is a basic measurement procedure designed to make data susceptible to tabulation, interpretation, and analysis."

Every sentence the participant stated was typed verbatim in a vertical cell. The line was marked by the counter on the tape recorder (the same recorder was used

throughout the entire process) as well as numbered in numerical order. On the horizontal lines, pre-established categories were written (Huberman & Miles, 1994). As Baset (2003) states, "Creating categories triggers the construction of a conceptual scheme that suits the data. This scheme helps the researcher to ask questions, to compare cross data, to change or drop categories and make a hierarchical order of them." (p. 144) The researcher manually organized the data into the categories. While placing lines into categories, there were statements made by the participants that covered several lines. All of those lines were included in the same category and coded accordingly.

After the coding was completed, the researcher isolated recurring themes, grouping and categorizing of responses to discover commonalties and differences of certain phenomena in the participants' words (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Seidman, 1998). As Kvale (1996) wrote,

The researcher goes beyond what is directly said to work out structures and relation of meaning not immediately apparent in a text. This requires a certain distance from what is said, which is achieved by a methodological or theoretical stance, recontextualizing what is said in a specific conceptual context. (p. 201)

All of the typing, categorizing, and coding from the interview was conducted by the researcher. This was done to ensure the reliability and validity of the interpretation of all the data (Crittenden & Hill, 1971).

Description of the Participants

This sample included five self-identified Mexican American participants, five self-identified Puerto Rican participants, five self-identified Cuban American participants, and five participants classified as “other,” specifically, three Colombian and two Brazilian. All of the participants attended four-year, residential colleges. There were nine Latinos and eleven Latinas who participated in the sample (Appendix E - Table 1). Ten students were first generation while eight were second generation (Appendix E – Table 3). Nineteen out of twenty participants stated they grew up in an urban setting (Appendix E – Table 5). Of the ten participants who were born in the United States, six came from the Midwest (Appendix E – Table 6). Fourteen of the participants stated Spanish was their primary language (Appendix E – Table 8), and eighteen stated they were bilingual (Appendix E – Table 9). Most were taught Spanish at home as well as in school (Appendix E – Table 12).

The level of educational attainment by participants’ fathers varied, with four not reaching high school while three achieved at least a master’s degree (Appendix E – Table 14). Twelve were labeled as either skilled or unskilled workers (Appendix E – Table 15). While sixteen reported their fathers were bilingual, only one reported his/her father spoke English only, while five spoke no English at all (Appendix E – Table 20). The level of education from the participants’ mothers were diverse, with seven having a high school degree, three having some college, three having a college degree and three having completed graduate work (Appendix E – Table 21). While eight of the participants’ mothers’ occupations were reported as unskilled, there were

also two professional and three managerial mothers reported as well (Appendix E – Table 22). Only one mother was born in the United States, and thirteen lived in an urban setting (Appendix E – Table 24). Two mothers spoke English as their primary language, and four did not speak English at all (Appendix E – Table 27).

The family income was fairly consistent within the different Latino groups. Eleven reported the family income to be between twenty thousand and forty thousand dollars. The one group that had the highest income was the “other” or South American group, in which all five participants had incomes of over sixty thousand dollars (Appendix E – Table 28). The participants were socio-economically diverse, ranging from an annual family income of under twenty thousand dollars to over sixty thousand dollars (Appendix E – Table 30).

A few points of information that were not asked on the questionnaire but came up during the interviews about the family and parents: (a) five participants came from divorced families; (b) four had lost one of their parents before entering college; (c) one participant had no idea where one of the parents was at, but the parents never divorced; and (d) one participant had parents who lived in different countries.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of the methodology for this qualitative study. The coding process was essential to developing certain themes within each subculture.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The topics of cultural difference, success, and barriers were explored to understand the factors that affected the experiences of Latino college students. During the interviews, the participants were asked a variety of questions. Their responses were grouped into specific areas: backgrounds; culture; factors that influenced educational attainment; college experiences; defining what success is; and advice for other Latinos.

Cuban

There were four females and one male Cubans who participated in the study. Three were born in the Southeastern part of the United States, while two were from Cuba. All spoke fluent Spanish, were bilingual, and reported that Spanish was the main language spoken in the home. All of the participants' parents were born in Cuba, with two coming to the U.S. in the past fifteen years. Four out of five fathers and all five mothers had a high school diploma or lower. Four of the mothers and three of the fathers only spoke Spanish. Four of the participants reported their family income to be between \$20,000 and \$40,000.

Background (Neighborhood, Family)

The participants had a variety of experiences while growing up. Two females grew up in California. Their parents came from Cuba, stayed in Miami for a while, and then moved. One of the females was actually born in Miami, while the other was born in Cuba and moved while at a very young age. The one female who was born in Miami was aware of her surroundings, both socio-economically and ethnically. She explained:

It was still California and I think to this day Del Garden which is a nearby town is the poorest in L.A. County, one of the poorest just economically just disadvantaged, but rich in many ways. We were in a safe neighborhood but we knew that it was not a prominent neighborhood. I think we all grew up knowing that we were just we had good friends it was just predominately Mexican American with a few people who had kind of Cuban backgrounds like we did. And you know what, when I think about it there was a lot of people who were Caucasian who had more of a traditional U.S. family life. The customs there in that neighborhood, it was pretty eclectic in many ways, but it was just economically what we all had in common whether race, background or family life, culture. Backgrounds were different economically. We all shared the same disadvantage. My grandmother and mother were seamstresses, so they worked out of the home to make some extra money so we helped them either folding things or cutting threads off of clothing.

The other female from California explained how she grew up with the same Cuban friends that she still has today. Her Cuban network was so strong; she stated she really didn't need much support from anywhere else.

I still live in the same neighborhood since I was 7 or so. Growing up in the Cuban club I grew up with the same people. Most of the friends I have now I have known for at least 15 years. So, most of my neighborhood was filled with other Cubans. When we got older we

always had the Cuban club celebrating New Years. My parents were both members of a Cuban club, so I grew up within the Cuban Club. We would do trips to Mexico, you would do dances, celebrated my 15th, very traditional in my culture, things of that nature. As a matter of fact I had a double 15th because my cousin and I are only 20 days apart. We had it together. It is almost like a coming out party. That is the best way to describe it.

Another female who was born in Cuba, then came to the United States, explained how her family moved to Chicago. There were no other family relatives around, so her immediate family is extremely close. She lived in a predominately Mexican neighborhood, but cited immediate family as her strongest support. She stated:

Family has played a very important role in my life. My family immigrated to the United States when I was very young and for various personal reasons, my extended family has always been dispersed. I have grown up surrounded by my immediate family only. I learned independency from a very young age partially due to the fact that my family always managed by itself. We always did what we had to do to take care of each other and to make sure we got ahead. It is for that reason that my immediate family is so connected. My neighborhood was mostly Mexican or Mexican American. I don't know why we moved into that area, but we did. We were the only Cubans in the area. It wasn't the greatest of places, but it was what we had.

Family was mentioned by all of the participants as an important part of their culture. They all stated how their families spent time together and how important those values were to the Cuban culture. One of the females stated:

You know, I came from a very close family niche. Everyone knew everything that was going on in the family. A lot of emphasis was placed on the children and the importance of raising the children. So those family traditions were great to see that I was exposed to early with friends.

Celebrations were also important with spending time with family. The male stated:

Food, music, celebration of birthdays, and holidays were spent together. Pretty much everything that was done, every decision was made as a family and you included the entire family. Kind of what I meant by simple is there was no going out to dinner. All meals were cooked at home with the family.

One of the females explained:

The big thing was Christmas, which we celebrated with our family, which is pretty big. My Mom has 5 brothers and sisters and all of their kids and 4 of them are here. We had a pretty big traditional Thanksgiving dinner as well as the Christmas holiday. We celebrate the 24th not the 25th, so it was more of a family reunion, so we did a lot more like going skiing or going to the movies. All the kids got together on the 25th and New Years it was a kids' function, not so much with the parents.

Another of the females stated her family was very close. She and her cousin, who she stated was her best friend, did everything together.

My family, we did everything together. We were a very close family. My cousin and I did everything together. So I never really felt like an only child. Uh, I always had cousins around, and family around. We did, so we always did everything together. We would celebrate birthdays, Christmas, holidays, even taking trips with my cousin who I am very, very close to.

Culture (Experiences, Differences)

All of the participants stated they had a rich cultural experience growing up in their families and neighborhoods. Most watched a steady brand of Spanish TV, radio, and magazines. One female stated:

We watched a lot of Spanish TV. I mean my sisters and I remember the Brady Bunch and I Love Lucy, those types of shows but predominately it was televisión, you know, Spanish stations.

Another female stated:

Spanish TV was it. In Cuba, you could only watch certain things. But the soaps, wow. Here in the States, it was wonderful. I remember switching back and forth with American programs, then Spanish programs. It drove my parents crazy. But, they also knew I wasn't going to be all Cuban. I am a Cuban American. That's the biggest difference between my parents and I. They call themselves Cubans living in America. I call myself Cuban American, since I am a citizen and they are not.

And the male:

My parents would make sure we didn't forget our heritage. They felt a steady dose of Spanish TV, even though it was Mexican TV in their eyes, Spanish radio and even magazines.

One female elaborated when asked about what her specific culture was. She described what she felt were Cuban characteristics.

I came from a strong family, beliefs and stuff, community oriented, family values, hard working, simple living. That's what being Cuban is all about.

Religion was also mentioned as an important aspect of Cuban culture. Four of the five participants went to parochial schools in grade school growing up, while three continued on in high school. Two attended public high schools. One female stated:

Church was such a huge part of my life growing up. I went to parochial school since first grade all the way through college. So, church and faith were a huge part of our family life. It was just the way we lived.

One of the females explained about her morals with being raised. She explained:

I would say religion played an important, um, [long pause] part of my life. Religion wise, I was Catholic. I went to a Lutheran elementary and Junior High. Then I went to a Catholic high school. I consider myself, um, obviously Catholic, but I think the moral principles that I was raised with, um, were pretty conservative.

When discussing about their culture, most of the participants talked a great deal about food. This was also one area where everyone stated was one of the biggest differences between Latinos. One female stated:

I'd love to talk to you about food that I still cook. Lots of pork, roast pork, traditionally for example traditional Christmas Eve is roast pork, with yuca, which is kind of our potatoes or starch. Everything is cooked with garlic and lemon juice. We make gongis, which is a mixture of white rice and black beans that is cooked together or you are able to eat it just the black beans with white rice (frijoles con blan aroz). We cook with minimal vegetables. Cubans don't traditionally eat a lot of vegetables, maybe just a salad to decorate the table.

Another female stated:

A lot of what we call ground beef, which we call picadito, which kind of looks like my husband [who is White] tells me, hash, corn beef hash kind of thing. I have a heavy sweet tooth. We eat a lot of guava, which is kind of in a paste or placed inside like a pastry like fill a paper and they're delicious. Not the healthiest eating, a lot of eating. Not the worst eating I've seen but definitely a lot of meat, rice, beans.

One of the females stated that food was a major indicator in what kind of Latino a person was. She experienced differences with what Mexicans ate and how her family cooked and prepared the food. She explained:

One of our very good friends was my best friend in kindergarten her name was Soche Cordova, which was Mexican. She and I spent a lot of time together with her family. We use to talk about how we were raised and things like that. That's when I recognized and mom realized at that point that people were different than me. I remember having going to Soche's house and coming home and realizing that they eat beans but that they eat brown beans and we eat the black beans. They have tacos and burritos and eat the pork we eat, but we don't eat the tortillas, we eat it with bread. Although they have pork, they have it in burritos. I also recognized at that point family customs that were typical of our family were so different in someone else's.

One female talked about how traditions and celebrations were different with the Latinos. She stated:

You can definitely tell the difference. There is this thing about them. Puerto Ricans and Cubans are very similar yet they have certain traditions. Mexicans had different holidays that they celebrate that we don't celebrate. So, yeah, you can definitely tell the difference.

Another female started laughing when she talked about differences among the Latino groups. She talked about how many cultures are time oriented, but that Cubans like to live in the here and now. She explained:

We call it Cuban time. Boy, some of my Dominican friends would wonder what was wrong with me. I told them, it's a Cuban thing. My girlfriend, who is White, goes crazy. I tell her I would pick her up around seven, and I don't show up 'til 7:30, you should see her. I would say that the time thing is a big difference between Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans and the other Latinos. It just seems that way.

The male participant shared an experience about how music was different with the different Latino groups. He stated:

I was exposed to some of the other Latino cultures. There were a lot of Puerto Rican, Dominicans from the east coast that were really into the Spanish scene and that was their thing and I wasn't really into that. So I learned more about it. Reggae tone Spanish Reggae. They were really into their music. I think that was a major difference between the groups.

Factors Influencing College Attendance

All of the participants stated the most influential factor related to education was their parents. Everyone talked about how their parents stressed education in life and that college was the only option. One of the females explained:

My parents were it. You know any extra money that they did have was poured into sending us to parochial school we didn't live in a very economical advantaged area in LA so the public schools weren't very good in the area that we lived in. They decided that they would pour their money into sending us to private schools to make sure that we received the right education. And that was something that was drilled to us. My grandfather was a professor in Cuba when he lived there and he thought education was first and foremost and should always be.

One of the females explained how her father instilled the value of education at an early age. She believed that through education, anything was possible. She stated:

My father, because he always growing up with two sisters in a very traditional home, he knew that sometimes people's biases would be, [pause] the woman would be, [pause] that I would be limited in the opportunities given to me, which are like the traditional ones of Cuba. And he wanted to make sure that his daughters, whatever we chose that at least it was our choice. And that we were given plenty of opportunities to choose from and the only way that you could do that was to open doors through education. Meeting new people, having knowledge, that was something. You know, one of his phrases was education is something that people can't take away from you, they can't take that away.

The male talked about how his parents gave up so much to come to this country. He wanted to give back to them.

You know, being early immigrants to the U.S., they lost everything, their home, their family keepsakes, albums; they basically came to the states with nothing. And when you're stripped of everything you know the only thing you have left is yourself. So, he [his father] always talked about education as something that nobody can ever challenge you on or take away from you. So he said basically that's what you need to do there was never a choice. I mean we were going to college, we could choose where we were going to college, but we were never giving the option. It was never a question of will you be going to college. It was where will you be going to college.

Another female talked about how her parents really didn't understand the English language, but were always supportive of education. She had an aunt and uncle who had lived in the United States since the late 1950's and really helped her through the college process.

Since I was raised by both my parents who weren't necessarily, didn't know English, my uncle and my aunt did. They were very focused on the education process; they were very involved with my schooling. You know, elementary, middle school, high school, and then college. And when I went to college, they helped me decide what I wanted to do. They were very supportive. Not that my parents weren't, they both were. It's just that my parents didn't have both languages and my aunt and uncle had both languages. They were much more involved with my school, per se, than my parents were.

One of the females explained how her mother was both the greatest influence and greatest obstacle for attending college. As she grew older, she appreciated what her mother did. She explained:

My family, um [long pause], my mother, um, it is really hard to explain. My mother was very strict with me growing up, and once I started college, we became more friends. I could tell her anything, she helped me through everything. Even though she has her own things, she is very supportive of me. So, the older I am getting, the more open I am with her.

College Experiences (Clubs, Finances, Barriers)

Most of the participants weren't involved with the clubs and organizations on campus. There was a variety of reasons, such as no time, not feeling welcome, feeling different, or just not fitting in. One female explained:

There was Mencha and I didn't feel like I fit in because they were very focused on Mexican American. The club wasn't very inclusive. I felt like I was being presumptuous although I grew up with more Mexican Americans than the average person there. You know, I didn't want to assume, I kind of thought, well maybe they don't want me there because I wasn't Mexican American.

One participant explained that she already had her own network and really didn't need any clubs. She had her friends and was at college for a purpose. Socializing with other students wasn't one of those purposes.

I had my own Cuban club, so I didn't need anything more. The Hispanic group at the school just wasn't for me. They did their thing and I did mine. I wasn't a sorority type or getting involved with other things that were going on in college. It was pretty much go to classes and go to work. Once I reached the university level, I needed to focus on that.

One participant stated she just felt like she fit in, but knew she was different. She explained:

There wasn't any clubs anything outside of school that I did. I mean, we had great teachers and there were great residential directors and advisors that watched out for all of us in the halls. I mean, I never felt like I didn't fit in, I just knew that I was different.

An event one of the females experienced happened on the first day of school when she moved into the residence halls. She knew there was a difference between her and the other students. She explained:

I went to a school where there were two kinds of kids; those who could afford it or kids you know applied for scholarships and grants. I was the kid who got there on financial aid. My parents drove up in a Ford Skylark and it wasn't a Mercedes. And that's when you realize, okay, when your parents are dropping you off at the dorms there's just a little difference. Let's just say, there were not a lot of Hispanics.

All of the participants stated they had to work in order to go to college. All of them received some form of financial aid, and were very familiar with the college process. One female explained:

I received scholarships and grants. I don't know if that still is going on in college or not. That's where it was obviously for economically disadvantaged. Both my parents were disabled. My father had a heart condition and my mother had phlebitis which is a blood clot problem. So having two parent physically disabled didn't leave for a lot of financial resources for us so we had to always look for scholarships, and we received grants and worked. I worked since I was I fifteen, so in college I kept on working. I had a bank teller job, and then worked for the school as a resident counselor. I then paid for my graduate school working in the residence halls as a hall director.

Another female explained that although her parents could have possibly afforded the costs of her attending college, she didn't want to place that burden on

them. She wanted to pay for school on her own. She felt it was something that she just expected of herself. She stated:

I worked for my aunt and my uncle for awhile while I was at community college. Then, I started getting jobs on my own to help my parents out to pay for school. I could have probably gone and just not worked, but that would have been very hard on my parents. They were so supportive; I felt that paying was the right thing to do. It should be expected that you pay as much as you can for school. I think you get more out of your education, you know?

The participants also shared some frustrations and barriers while trying to obtain an education. One female, whose parents did not speak English, had to translate everything from the schools. It was difficult trying to meet those expectations all of the time, but was also rewarding because you were such an integral part of every conversation. She explained:

I spent a lot of time translating for my parents. You know that's one of those things that I try to explain to others that when your parents only know one language, you are the translator during parent/teacher conferences; you are the translator at the doctor appointment. So, automatically, it's almost you as a child, you're treated as an adult. You're expected to translate and to understand what's going on. You're not excluded from adult conversation because a lot of that you need to translate. So, I think it was very reassuring and confidence boosting for my sisters and I to have to do those things meaning very reluctantly at first. It was just hard to meet those expectations all of the time.

One female stated that although the family was extremely supportive of her attending college, they were also a major obstacle. She explained:

I spent a lot of time on the weekends visiting my family. There was a lot of time still spent worrying about my family. I just felt like I just didn't belong there at school.

Another female discussed the hardship of trying to pay for college. She wondered what type of college experience she would have had if she didn't have to work. She stated:

Oh, I don't know; the basic barriers like the financial situation. I mean keeping or having two jobs and keeping your GPA up is a struggle for anyone and I wish, you know, that was the only time that I wish that it wasn't that way just because it would have been easier to have more of a typical college experience.

When asked what she meant by a typical experience, she stated:

You know, not having to worry about where the money was coming from, being able to get more involved with the school, activities, that sort of thing. The more typical college life that you read about, I guess.

Two of the participants focused on the high schools when discussing barriers for Latinos. One female participant, who went to a public school, stated:

My high school didn't really help. I had good grades in school, so they were helpful in that way. But, they really didn't help a lot with college. My family supported me there.

The male participant felt the educational system as a whole has not been supportive of Latinos, especially in the high schools. He explained:

A lacking educational support system, which is the case for many predominantly Latino high schools, is discouraging for many students who may wish to pursue a higher education.

Success in College

Most of the participants related success to happiness and being proud of what they have accomplished. All of the participants stated they wanted their families to be proud of what they have achieved. They all had the expectation of going to college and making something of themselves, of being those professional in their careers. One female said her happiness related to her family and not how smart a person was. She explained:

I always equated success with being happy, not necessarily the diploma, but the people who were happiest to me equated success with a diploma and I'll tell you why. My oldest sister skipped two grades and my younger sister skipped a grade. My older sister struggled in school socially because of being part of the group of kids that she was academically, put into she went to college very early. And I knew that being smart didn't mean that you were happy. I knew that there was much more to success than being smart, so for me it was kind of looking at a bigger picture, if that makes any sense.

Another participant explained that having the family be proud of you is what success has meant to her. She stated:

To me, success was having a strong family that always supported you and being happy and proud of what you did no matter what you choose. I didn't have to be at the genius level, I didn't have to be the Einstein, and at early life I came to grips with that. So, it was really interesting. So, for me it was trying figure out what am I good at, I'm not good at the numbers, I'm not good at the math that my sister is at. But, I am good at other things. My dad was always very reinforcing of that it was just finding out and my parents always reinforced, you know, him being a stockbroker who married my mother who was very rural farm, you know, raised on a farm who had very minimal education.

Another participant talked about being a professional and how he could give back to the community once he achieved this goal. He explained:

Why did I want to stay in college and be successful? I wanted to be a professional. The more school and the more I did with work and going to school pushed me. I knew how far or high you could get whenever you needed an education to back you up. With that, I could give back to those who needed it.

What Needs to Happen

All of the participants had a wide range of suggestions for Latinos and institutions to consider. Some of these thoughts included role modeling, having clear expectations, setting goals, and reviewing current programs that are being offered to Latinos. Three participants focused on the concept of role models and mentors. The male participant stated:

I think as professors or educators or as mentors whoever we are; I think we just need to encourage people to focus on the positive things because everything happens for a reason.

One of the females talked about how seeing Hispanic women may have influenced her.

You know, kind of, the road leads to many different ways and the mentorship I think is very key. I'm sure I saw some Hispanic women in positions early on in life; and that maybe consciously I didn't recognize it but unconsciously it stuck with me. Something was positive along the way that I never thought that I wasn't supposed to be somewhere.

Another participant went more in-depth on making connections in school. She stated:

I think the biggest influence is to have a connection, you know, a personal connection with someone. I had a personal connection with one of the nuns who lived on our floor in our dorms. I also had a personal connection with my resident advisor. There were a couple of professors that I really connected with. I think that makes a difference, it makes a difference in coping with anything advisable in our lives. It's having a personal connection with someone or something that makes you feel like I can hang on to this or that I can do this. We all have difficult situations to deal with and if we are the outsider or not. I think finding a point that if we find similarity it helps us stick with. It really does. It kind of pushes asides all the differences and you just start focusing on that one similarity and it gets you to the next one and to the next one and then you start realizing, boy this place, I have a lot of thing in common with this place, as opposed to just focusing on the negativity.

One female stated that more needs to happen with Latinos as they are entering the college setting. More programs need to happen during Orientation that focuses on the needs of Latino students. She explained:

During school orientation, we need to do something for Hispanic students. There wasn't a special orientation for any type of students beside the general orientation. Maybe someone should have looked at that or at least had a list of perhaps recognizing that some kids are not here because their parents can afford it, you know? How are we going to manage that difference?

One participant felt the college staff needed to reach out more to the Latinos, to make them more welcome. It shouldn't be just the Latino Club or Latino studies professors that reach out, she stated. She felt it needed to be the resident advisors, the administration, those who a person won't typically think would care. She explained:

It is just expected, you know, for the Latinos on campus to come and welcome you. They, you know, contacted me making sure I was ok. What are we going to do? Having, you know, acknowledge maybe a residential advisor or a professor, not from the Latino studies area, acknowledge us or send the message, to be clear to students that no matter who you are we want you here and we want to keep you here and there's different ways to make sure that is reinforced daily for students.

Two of the participants stated that Latinos need to have clear goals in order to obtain the education they desire. They stated:

You have to set your sights and stick to them. You need to have goals. Period.

And:

I would like to say that for Latinos, you need to set a goal and do everything in your power to achieve that goal. And don't look so much around and analyze everything that might get in your way.

Another participant stated that Latinos need to challenge themselves by reaching out and getting to know others. Even though the family is a main support, Latinos need to seek out others as well. She explained:

I had to do well in school academically so along with that there was the expectation of you needing to do more. You know, you need to challenge yourself. You're capable of doing more, so there was always that conversation with teachers. It's always very assuring, especially as a college student to, or a high school student, to know that other people believe in you, not just your family.

Mexican

There were three males and two females who participated in the study. Three were born in the Midwest of the United States, while two were from Mexico. One was a junior, one was a senior, two were in graduate school, and one had recently graduated from college. Four spoke fluent Spanish and were bilingual, while one reported only knowing basic Spanish. Three reported that Spanish was the main language spoken in the home. One reported that only his/her mother spoke Spanish, while his/her father only spoke English. Four of the participants' parents were born in Mexico, with most coming to the U.S. in the past fifteen years. All of the parents had at least a high school diploma, with six parents having at least some college experience. One of the mothers and two of the fathers only spoke Spanish. Four of the participants reported their family income to be between \$20,000 and \$40,000, while one reported the income to be under \$60,000.

Background (Neighborhood, Family)

The participants came from a variety of neighborhoods while growing up. Four of the five participants were around other Latinos in their neighborhoods. All of them were raised in an urban setting, having to overcome many obstacles such as violence and poor resources in the community. One male explained:

We lived in the uptown area. We lived there from when we got here. You know, Mexicans don't move around a lot. We are very solitary. It was a unique neighborhood. It was predominately an African American neighborhood. Two distinctive buildings were on the block. You had

all the African Americans all around, but wedged in the middle were two distinct groups in each building. One building had full of Mexicans and one building full of Asians, next to each other. The rest were African Americans. We were not allowed to go outside and play. It was so dangerous. You could hear gun shooting every single day. It was a common thing. The windows had barbed wire to keep people from coming in. You couldn't open the windows during the summer.

One female explained the subtle change in her neighborhood as she grew up. It went from a mostly white neighborhood to a predominately Mexican and African American neighborhood. She also made an emphasis on her being an American at the end. She stated it several times, repeating that she was a U.S. citizen.

We lived in a community that was mostly white ethnic and we saw that change as we got older. We saw the change come from the majority of Mexican American and Latino arrivals, then the African American. The formation within the households was definitely working class. It wasn't Latino, it was Mexican, but we were all American, we were all U.S. citizens. We became U.S. citizens right away. Although the neighborhood changed, we still kept who we were. But we had to let some things go. But, I'm an American from Mexico.

One male discussed how unsettled his family was. There was a great deal of movement with the family split up while certain members settled in the United States. They came to the U.S. in small groups. He never saw his father again. He stated:

I grew up in Mexico, in a small rural town, midsize. I was in Catholic school up to 5th grade. I was forced to migrate up here. My father migrated to the United States to get a better job [made hand motions in quotes]. I didn't know my father. When I came, well, my Mom came first and then a month later my Mom came back and brought three of us which were my two sisters and my second oldest brother. Then, the oldest stayed with my brother and I. And he played the role as my father figure when we were young. Then once she was settled here, she went back for the three of us and brought us back here to Chicago.

One male talked about not seeing his father much because of working so much.

My Dad worked a lot. He would work his factory job from 8-5 everyday. He wouldn't get home until 6:30 at night. Then in the late 80's he started his own chorizo business so he made his own chorizo in his basement. He would make it on Thursday night and deliver it on Friday night, so he wasn't home much. He just worked a lot. He was an example for me because I work a lot now, too. My Mom was always there. She took us to school, helped with the homework, took us to the doctor, stuff like that.

Most of the Mexican Americans discussed their secondary educational experiences in more detail than the other groups. They all stated their neighborhood schools didn't really prepare them for college. One particular participant was even labeled with a disability when he came to the United States. His experiences could also reflect those Mexicans who are migrants. He explained:

I came up from Mexico expecting to go into 4th grade. I was retained in 3rd grade, actually, I was pushed back one. I was there, my brother was in 4th grade, my sister was in 6th grade, so on in the pecking order. And I guess, my Mother instilled a lot about education. Education was the most important thing. Then, when I was in the elementary school, I had to pick up learning the language. I had learning problems. I was confusing both Spanish and English. They didn't know what the heck was wrong. I was considered learning disabled. And they went in and told my mom that I was mentally retarded. And then my Mom approached me and said, 'Oh my God, my poor Bobolito. He doesn't know nothing. He can't read, he can't write.' I was treated as a second class. But the biggest obstacle here was the acculturation aspect of the American educational system where the students are treated as second class. They're not given the respect or recognition, as I soon discovered that teachers were using books and using disciplinary action. I don't know what is going on, 'why are you hitting me?' I don't understand the rationale.

One male had an opportunity to leave his neighborhood's school and attend a magnet school in a different part of the city. He gave up his friends, playing in sports, and being one of the top students to try and receive a better education.

Up until Junior High, my primary school was about a block from my house. It was a public school. Predominantly it was Mexican American. I was there until around the 7th grade when a professor noticed that I was doing pretty well for my age reading at a higher level. So they sent me to a magnet school that was in a predominantly Irish and African American neighborhood. So, I went there from 8th grade through high school. I had a different experience from most of my friends since they went to the local public school, which was predominantly Mexican. So, they went through a whole different experience than I went through. I went to school that was predominantly black. It was 85% blacks. So, we had totally different experiences even though we lived in the same neighborhood. They went to high school around the block, and I took three buses to the Southside.

The same male started talking about his best friend growing up. He talked about differences in the schools they attended growing up.

We both had the same opportunity to get out of our neighborhood and go to a magnet school. However, the school was three bus rides away. I think it made a big deal. I think so, my other best friend in junior high as we were growing up; he was just as smart if not smarter than I was. He was offered the opportunity to go to the school the same as I was. He said no. So, he stayed at the grade school and graduated from there. He went to the local high school. He graduated there. He did 2 years of community college, didn't graduate, then nothing. I don't know. He didn't like it so he went into the Navy. He had just as much potential if not more than I did. He just didn't want to go. Now he works in a factory. It's kind of sad, you know.

One female explained about her neighborhood school and how there were so few Latino role models. The school provided minimal support for the students, which were predominately Mexican. Most students dropped out before graduating.

My neighborhood was predominantly Latino. The type of school I went to is a place where the stereotypes for Latinos thrive. There was a very high drop-out rate and there were few who excelled for the academic merits. The school had a child care center for those students with children. A lot of my friends had babies before getting out of high school. Gangs were common on school grounds. Most of the other kids in my neighborhood and school were of a similar background. I grew up in working class neighborhood, where many of the families were immigrants from Latin America, especially Mexico. However, the faculty at my school was mostly white. That was strange.

Culture (Experiences, Differences)

Most of the participants felt a strong bond with being Mexican American. They all stated their Mexican heritage was something of which to be proud. They also felt a certain distance with other Mexican Americans who were not from their own neighborhoods. One male stated:

If you asked my mom she would say she is Mexican even though she is a US citizen. Anything, it depends on the region, rationality - growing up in the Midwest, in Chicago. Whereas, if you were growing up in California you would have more of a Chicano, or Latino. On the East coast more Latino. But we all had a certain Mexican American identity.

He was asked what he meant by Mexican American Identity. He responded:

By traditions, by language, by cultural values, by community, but the thing is it is not - if you ask someone from Mexico, it's not Mexican. That is where I don't identify as a Mexican. I'm a Mexican American. I don't hold the same traditions as people from Mexico. It's like we assimilated, then went back, but it wasn't the same. It is hard to explain.

One male explained about his shock entering the United States. He experienced different cultures within his own community. He stated:

The culture shock was tremendous for me, coming from Mexico when I was young. The language barrier was different for me, in terms of my personal perspective. I had never seen an Asian, never seen a black, and never seen anyone else beyond Mexican. I do recollect my immediate reaction from going to a public education versus a private school. At the old school it was yes, no, everybody's quiet, everything is contained. Here in the U.S., everyone is like, what the heck is going on? Now I think they should give that medication that they give to contain them.

Four out of five participants talked about listening to Spanish TV and radio.

One explained:

We watched Spanish TV when we could, but the only thing my mom let us kids have was an old 8 track. The radio, but the music we listened to were oldies from Mexico. We lived in a two-bedroom apartment, all seven of us.

Another stated:

We ate traditional Mexican food. My mom would make tortillas with flour, refried beans, tamales, things like that. Food was important to us, but for different reasons. It was more of a time to spend with family rather than just eating.

Religion also played a major part in all of the participants' lives growing up.

Although some said they no longer practice their faith, all five mentioned they were raised Catholics. One female stated:

Spirituality plays an important part in my life, if you lose faith you've got nothing left, however in a different manner than the conventional Catholic Church. It was and still is very important to me.

One of the males explained while he no longer practices the faith, the values stuck with him.

Well, we were raised Roman Catholic, so we were raised with the Bible in one hand [laughter]. We also went through CCD, we got our sacraments. My parents really used that as guidelines to raise us. I am not a practicing Catholic anymore, but I guess I have those values with me still.

Most of the participants were quick to respond when asked if there were differences among Latinos. Some discussed their neighborhoods, while others discussed specific experiences while in high school or college. One female commented:

We had certain values that were different from the other families in the neighborhood. When I had my grandmother living in the house, that was great. My abuelita living in Mexico and coming back and forth to stay with us. Having family, certain events for family, language, being able to go between languages very easily, having very strong - even though my parents were separated, having very strong union between sisters, brother, mother being proud of having an ancestry that dated to Mexico was important.

One male discussed his family's experiences growing up. He said although people got along, he knew the differences just by looking around.

My grandparents and father worked in the Pullman factory on the south side of Chicago and on the east side with the Ford automotive industry as well. Even within that we saw segregation. My family being able to identify with other Mexicans working on the same job and with other minorities and other white ethnics, but knowing there was a formation within the job network. You stayed with your own group even though you interacted with other groups on the job.

One male described his experiences with other Mexicans from across the country. He felt there were differences from what region a Latino came from. They even called themselves different names by what region they were from. He explained:

The Latino students on campus, and that was something that was really important to me was to be involved in that group, but we differed so much in the fact that the majority of them were from either three places; California, Texas or from the east coast. Here I was from the Midwest. The kids from California or Texas were mostly Mexican or Mexican Americans. The kids from the east coast were Puerto Rican, Dominicans, Cubans or Colombians. And within those groups, the students that were Cubans were more well off than certain students from California depending on if they were from Orange County, were more well-off. Certain students from Texas, depending on their region, even if they lived in the valley down there in Texas, they were more well-off because you hear about a lot about the Macudoras and factories and whatever and the parents who own them. So they were kind of those students. Then there were the very Afro-Puerto Rican, Afro-Dominicans and Afro-Cuban students that interacted with the African American culture as well. You have your Chicanos, Mexican Americans, Migrants. And I thought there were just Latinos. Was I wrong.

A female explained a similar situation where the Latinos stayed in their own groups in college. She thought that since they were all Latinos, why couldn't they hang out together. She was surprised that the segregation was so prominent within the Latino community. She explained:

I was so used to being at a high school with such a small percentage of Latinos that I naively went in thinking that everyone would know each other. I was so wrong. The Mexicans stayed in their group while the Cubans stayed in their group. It was segregated among the Latinos. I just couldn't believe it. I thought we were all one, but I guess we weren't. Even among the Mexicans, we were grouped. Those from the Midwest were so different from the Southwest. And all of them didn't

associate with the non-Spanish speakers. It was as if those who didn't speak Spanish weren't Mexican enough to belong.

One male had an experience in a classroom that made him think about his learning style and culture. He had been failing a class and didn't know why. He found out that his attitudes and values about respect were challenged by both his professor and his mother. He stated:

Yeah, I mean, my friends who are Puerto Rican would challenge the professor and look her in the eye. Whereas my other colleagues who were Mexican or Central American, we would all look down. [laughter]. I looked down. He pulled me aside and said you need to change that behavior. You are not going to survive here. Professors will think that you are lying. Look at me! Every day I had to talk at him. He forced me to look at him in the eye. That is what I learned. This is the American culture. You gotta love this. And then I did that to my mama and she said, "Are you disrespecting me? Are you challenging me?" That was a mistake. In the Latino culture, Mexicans, you look down. The others, Puerto Ricans, you looked at them.

A female described the difference with her social life. It was very different when she went out with her Mexican friends and when she went out with her other Latino friends. She stated:

The people from Central America, they were always waiting for us. They would always get mad when we said a dance or something would start at 9 pm and we wouldn't get going until 10:30 or 11 at night. They just didn't understand about being social. Time is the here and now.

Factors Influencing College Attendance

All of the participants cited their parents as the most influential factor in attending college. There were no differences among the participants in relation to family income, level of education of parents, siblings, or even language. Every participant emphasized their parents' influence on educational attainment. One male and two females spoke generally about the family. One stated:

Family was very important seeing how hard my family had to work not having certain benefits of being able to have a professional white collar career. They worked hard so that I wouldn't have to deal with the same kind of bureaucracy and BS basically back-breaking work that they had to deal with. Also, I knew eventually I would have to take care of my mother. She pushed my sisters and I to go to school, even though we couldn't afford it.

Both females went further and explained how it was the family expectation to go to college. One stated:

My family always pushed us, my brother and sister, to pursue a college education. When the time came around to decide on college, it was no question whether or not I was to attend. It was more a question of what I wanted to study and where I would go. College in my home was always seen as a responsibility.

The other female explained:

My parents said I had to go to college. So, that is what I did. My parents, they really stressed it all through high school. All through grade school I got straight A's. All through high school I did the same thing. I would get a B or C now and then. I was getting bored again. I wasn't too excited about college. But then I got here and I am doing pretty well.

Two males discussed how their mothers were particularly influential in their decision making. One of the males stated:

My mother is a very strong person, and although we have our differences at times, she has always supported me in my decisions and always reassured me when I thought something couldn't be done. Because my parents never had the opportunity to pursue a college degree, they have always been very strict with their expectations as far as education is concerned. They have always pushed us to do our best. In fact, it is in this area where I feel my parents have done their best parenting. They have given us all the support possible both in terms of moral and financial support. They have also pushed us to leave home to study, even though they knew how emotionally and financially difficult it would be. As far as academics are concerned, they have always been behind us 100%.

The other male explained:

Well, my mom was the fatherly and motherly figure. She played both roles. That means whatever she said, it was. That was the rule. "You respect me. Don't challenge me. I am your mother and father." Basically, she instilled that you have to read to get ahead. And, don't let anyone step on you. She put a bench mark for everyone. "No one in our house is allowed to not finish a high school degree. It is a must. And you must give me something beyond high school." That was the day I changed. I knew what I had to do.

College Experiences (Clubs, Finances Barriers)

Most of the participants stated they entered college with the expectation of being involved with some Latino organization their first year. They were all contacted by someone within the group, usually an upper-class student or a staff member from the Latino Office. Most stated they had very good experiences with the clubs. One male stated:

LARES (Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services) really helped. I just ran into one of my counselors I met 4 1/2 years ago. I remember his name and everything. It was great talking to him. I remember coming here to the office, so it is a great place to have. It helped during my freshman year. They offer a lot of materials that you need, like the scholarships and the computers to use. It's nice. When you come here you feel kind of like, you feel comfortable.

Three of the participants, two males and one female, stated they became involved with the Latino clubs on campus. Their involvement included attending dances, seminars, social get-togethers, and just hanging out near the main office. One female explained:

I really loved being involved with LARES. I enjoyed the camaraderie with hanging out with other Latinos, especially Mexicans. It's not that I wasn't involved with other clubs on campus. It's just that this is where I felt most comfortable. It was a place where I could be myself and not have to put on any other faces or pretend, you know?

One male, however, did have a negative experience with the Latino organization. He felt isolated and not welcomed. Although he considered himself to be a Latino and Mexican American, he wasn't fluent in Spanish. He felt this really changed the way other Latinos viewed him. He felt he lived the culture, but since he didn't speak the language, he wasn't really accepted. He also didn't really fit in with the other groups as well because of their expectations of him. He explained:

I felt like when I was a first-year student, I was kind of tapped into participating into a Latino group without even having an understanding of what they were about. They just expected me to participate and I willingly accepted that the first term, but then I realized that I didn't have much in common with these kids. I really didn't speak Spanish, and they liked to speak it a lot. So that expectation was hard for me of them. Then, white students or other students who weren't Latino had a

certain expectation of me to be a part of that. I basically had no group to associate with.

One female also stated she became involved with other activities and really didn't need the clubs for support any more.

I mostly do social service-oriented activities. Last semester I ran a program for disadvantaged children. I have also become involved with a conflict resolution and negotiation organization that works on an international scale. So, I am pretty involved in my major. When I graduate this semester, I will have experience related to my major.

Several of the participants talked about certain struggles within the classroom setting. One male shared his experience in one class about not understanding some of the examples the instructor was using during a lecture. In another class, he simply didn't understand what the instructor was saying. He explained:

The struggle that I faced is that you are not, the different style of teaching. The things that were familiar to me weren't taught. I didn't get it what they were teaching the rules. I would think, "What are you talking about? I don't get your examples?" I had another professor who I took a class with. She says, "I know you understand the concepts but you failed my class." What the hell is wrong? She says one word, vocabulary. The way I phrase the words, because they use big \$10 words, is wrong. In high school, they don't teach you that. You're not taught that. And here in college you are expected to think. Think. Don't give me what the book says, which I was taught when I was in 6th grade through high school. Regurgitate what the book says. Verbatim. In college, it's considered plagiarism.

Two of the participants, one female and one male, shared their frustrations about how their families were also barriers in trying to finish their degrees. One male

stated his Mom, who was his most influential person in getting an education, also kept him from having an inflated ego. He stated:

When you become educated, your family goes against you. Now you think you know it all just because you got the degree. This is what my mom says. "Don't let knowledge go over your head because sometimes you are stepping on it. Smart people do the stupidest mistakes. I don't care how many degrees you have." Life experience, life teaches you a lot.

The female shared her experiences with other Mexican friends.

Positive pressure from the family to attend college many times does not occur, and students are encouraged to not flee far from home. One of my best friends who had the same grades as I did wasn't allowed to come here. She would have been great. It would have been nice to have another Mexican from the neighborhood. But, her parents didn't encourage her like mine did.

The other female viewed barriers for Latinos in a broader term. She stated:

Growing up in a hybrid culture pursuing a college education is often not a common goal for many Mexicans and certainly not for women. There is certainly a lack of role models and a problem with financing.

She then goes on to a more personal level. She also shared that a simple task like going home was not a luxury she could afford.

I think economically, there are problems as well. I had to worry about being able to finance, not only finance, but being able to pay for books, plane tickets back and forth for the holidays. I didn't get to go home as much as the kids who lived close. So they got to go home pretty often for the weekend. They needed a weekend, they could just get on a bus or drive; I couldn't do that.

Financially, most of the participants paid their own way through college. They did this through student loans, scholarships, and jobs. All five participants worked to stay in school. Most discussed the fact that their parents couldn't help out with the finances. They had to figure out ways to pay for college. Otherwise, they knew they wouldn't be able to afford it. One male stated:

I took an individual loan. I picked my university because it was need-based by family income. But I have a lot of loans now so I have a lot of individual loans that I have to pay back. It is not as much as some folks but it was definitely worth it. My family gave some if they knew that I was in a bind and needed some help. I remember maybe they gave a few hundred every so often. But after the freshman year, I didn't get any type of support from them. They simply couldn't afford it.

One male attended his first college. However, he knew nothing about financial aid. He didn't understand the process of loans and the concept of having to pay them back. He felt no one explained the process to him. So, he simply left the school and went to another, with the assistance of a professor. He explained:

I paid my way through school with scholarships. I stayed at the dorms from my grades. I was given one year. I call it the worm on the hook. They reel you in, then you are stuck. You gotta pay the loans. My mom and I couldn't afford it. We didn't know about financial aid. No one explained that. We didn't have no clue. I still owed them money. I did not know I had to pay things. I worked at McDonalds trying to cover expenses. And through my high school years, I worked there as well. I couldn't afford it. I looked at my professor. What do I do? He said, "You can't afford College X, so you go to College Y. Take College X as a loss. Start again. So, I started again. I went to College Y. I started over. I couldn't afford to pay my bills so I just left. I couldn't do anything else. I owed them money. They wouldn't release my records until I paid. So, I just left and didn't say anything.

One male paid his way through scholarships and grants. He received help from a counselor at one of the Latino centers who explained how he could get enough money to pay for school. He was proud that his parents didn't pay for any of his college education.

I haven't had to pay for school for 4 years until last year. I have gotten financial aid and scholarships all 4 years. I can graduate college in 4 years and not have any debt. Financial aid helped out a lot. I can't thank them enough. I also had scholarships. It paid pretty much everything. I also lived at home, so that saved a lot. I also worked since I was 16. That paid for everything else. My parents didn't have to spend anything on me. I'm proud of that.

One female paid through scholarships and loans. However, she also secured an internship to help defray the costs. She planned out her schedule so she could take advantage of the opportunity.

I worked. I had more the opportunity to do internship/coop because I had extra classes toward my schedule, so I got to work longer because I worked my junior year from March to August or September. I earned enough money so I didn't have to work as much my following year. I planned it that way. It was better to work when I wasn't in class versus when I was in class.

Success in college

All of the participants viewed success as a grander vision than just grades in college. They all discussed giving back to the community, doing things for their family, and having a career that they love. One of the females stated:

I think success means contributing to the community as a whole and holding leadership roles in student groups and challenging myself to go

beyond to do well in my major. In addition to doing well in my major, I also did theater and contributed in that part and I expanded myself by really developing relationships with professors. It's hard to do that for a lot of kids in college and I think I had the opportunity to do that with the propensity more so than other students.

A female explained her idea of success was to truly love what she was doing.

Success in college to me means having chosen a career that I love and one that allows me to grow both in the professional and in the personal level. I think that if one can find what one truly wants to do, one will inevitably put her best efforts in doing a great job.

One of the males talked about the money and aspects of doing well for his family.

Economic success goes hand in hand with being great at something and although it is not my first definition of success in college, it's certainly a driver to pursue higher degrees. I also have the responsibility to do well and become a professional for my family.

Another male went even deeper than most with his thoughts on success. He believed that he was able to handle any situation because of his education. He didn't mention money or family, but thought success came from inside him. He was more internal about his reflections.

The ability to be a free thinker and be able to analyze any circumstances. That is what success is. Not material things. The ability to analyze things, complicated stuff that people don't understand the jargon. And the ability to challenge. The things that are unjust and make a correction. You make the attempt. To say, "I did it." I was able to do it. And I was able to achieve it beyond all of these obstacles within the society and with all these labels that I received; I achieved success beyond all the obstacles. Why? I am success and never see myself as a failure.

What Needs to Happen

All of the participants felt a need to share their insights on what needs to happen for Latinos to be more representative in higher education. Although this question came at the end of the interview, all five participants became energized with wanting to provide small antidotes to assist Latinos in furthering their education. One female became very passionate with her statement of having to possibly lose some things about yourself in order to move ahead. She felt a person didn't have to lose his or her culture, but he or she may have to put it aside to succeed. She stated:

Even if you feel you are losing your culture, you have to sacrifice something to succeed. You can go back and retain whatever you have felt you lost. I mean, but never lose your culture. You may have to sacrifice, but compromise. Compromise. It is not the materials that you are wearing; it is what you have in your hand. It's what you have. Can you go to sleep peacefully? That's all that matters. What are you using your degree for? To help your people.

One male prescribed a similar direction, saying sacrifice was the key to staying ahead. He explained:

Latinos can succeed in anything they want as long as they put their mind to it. Put aside those barriers "a na mi nigrante," I don't speak the language. I can get lost. You cross the border or the border crosses you. Make the best of it. In academia, we as individuals have to cross the borders. And move ahead. There are so many opportunities. You can fail, but you can get right back up and try again. You need to be able to sacrifice.

He also added, though, that Latinos needed to always remain true to their culture and heritage.

Always go back to your heritage. It will always save you. As Latinos, I felt when I was in college I didn't belong with my family. They didn't understand what I was going through. I was late at night and they thought I was doing drugs and getting into trouble. My mom would ask me what I was doing and I would tell her I was studying. I would say, 'Mom, I need it.' Those are some of the conditions that Latinos would face. My sister had it worse. My mom would always worry and then I would have to explain that it was ok, she was not getting into trouble and that she was just doing her work.

One male shared his thoughts on how to get ahead. He felt the only way for Latinos to move on in education was to get out of the neighborhood and seek out better opportunities. He explained:

You know, I must say, I got a chance to get out of the neighborhood early on in junior high. I went to a different neighborhood that was a lot more affluent than mine. They had big houses and nice cars and they had parks. You realize that we are from the same city, we are only 20 minutes away. But, I would have never seen it otherwise. I really think getting out of there early on was key for me getting into college.

One participant explained it was okay for Latinos to mix with their own kind. Latinos were naturally going to seek out others like themselves. They needed to find that support because everyone else was going to. He stated:

Yeah, when you come to college and it's not your local high school, it's different. And you head into that cafeteria for the first time, you are gonna want to sit with your Mexican brethren. You are going to naturally go there. And know the Cubans and Puerto Ricans are doing the same thing. And know that the Muslims are going to do the same and the African Americans and the Anglo Saxons. I find that it is a lot more in college than anywhere else.

One male ended his interview with his perspective on identity. He believed that in college, most people became more ethnocentric because they didn't want to lose who they were. He explained:

When you get here, you are looking for your identity here. You don't want to get lost in the wash or you don't want to be homogenized. You kind of want to keep your Latino background, your Latino flair. You want to keep your identity. You don't want to lose it at the university. I think it is great that we have LARES. I think it's great that we have sort of a family here. It's nice to have. You don't want to get lost at college. It is a big thing. I know people lose their identity when they come here. And they don't want to lose it so they kind of make up for it in different ways. They become more [long pause] ethnocentric. I think college makes people more ethnocentric when they just don't know who they are. And they don't want to lose who they are.

Puerto Rican

There were two males and three females who participated in the study. Three were born in the Midwest, one was from New York, and the other was from Puerto Rico. Two were seniors, and three had graduated from college. Four reported that they spoke fluent Spanish, they were bilingual, and that Spanish was the main language spoken in the home. One reported that he/she could not speak or understand Spanish very well. Four of the participants' parents were born in Puerto Rico, with most coming to the U.S. in the past fifteen years. All of the mothers had at least a high school diploma, with one having a college degree. One of the fathers did not go beyond grade school, three more earned a high school diploma, and one father had gone to graduate school. Four of the mothers and all of the fathers are bilingual. One of the participants reported the family income to be below \$10,000, two of the

participants reported their family income to be under \$20,000, one reported the family income to be under \$40,000, and one reported the family income to be above \$60,000. The Puerto Rican participants did have the widest range of reported income among the four groups.

Background

All of the participants grew up in an urban setting, three from Chicago, one from New York, and one from San Juan, Puerto Rico. Four of the participants described neighborhoods that were very difficult to focus on education. Most of the group stated that if it were not for their families, they wouldn't have made it through high school, let alone college. One male explained:

I came from a neighborhood where most kids didn't go to high school, let alone college. I lived on the East side with my brothers and sister. We didn't have a lot of money. Most of my friends were either Puerto Rican or Black. We lived in an apartment that wasn't the safest of places. There were a lot of shootings and stuff like that. But, we had each other. That was the important thing.

The one participant who came from Puerto Rico didn't want to go into detail why his family left Puerto Rico, but he did share some information about his neighborhood growing up.

My family moved from Puerto Rico to the States because my Mom had family here. I grew up on the south side of Chicago, where I still live now. It's not the best of neighborhoods. My childhood, there were all minorities in the neighborhood. Not a lot of Anglo-Saxons, really. Well, it was predominately African American. But slowly, I would say in the last 15 years it became a real Puerto Rican neighborhood. That has really changed in the past 15 years. So, we grew up in that

environment. I learned English from my friends. From, the black kids next store and the other Puerto Rican kids across the street. That's how I learned English at first. Then I went to grade school and learned it properly.

One of the females, who grew up in what she referred to as a great place, explained:

My neighborhood was great. There were a lot of other Hispanics around, but there were Polish, Irish, whites, African American, you know. It was really mixed. My family, that was a little crazy. Even though my parents were split growing up, almost all of the time was spent with either my mom or my sisters or some relative. Uncles, grandmother, we didn't live close together but spent a lot of time together. We went shopping all of the time I was with my mom and sisters after school. I didn't think there was a world beyond my family up to the age of 8. It was a treat to be with cousins, go to family events, Christmas, thanksgiving, birthday parties, cookouts; I didn't think there was anything beyond family until I really got involved with sports at school.

Another female talked about how her family taught her about values. She explained the whole neighborhood was about raising the children right:

It seemed like I had five sets of parents growing up. The other families would watch over all the kids in the neighborhood. Most of my friends were taught that lying was wrong, stealing was wrong, killing was wrong. We were also taught about respect. Always respect your parents no matter what. We stayed within those guidelines. We were taught that working was good, so we worked. We were taught that school was a good thing. Education was not a right, but a privilege. We were always pushed to go to school. We all just hung out together. It was mostly Puerto Ricans where I was, so I had a lot of extended family around.

Culture (Experiences, Differences)

Most of the participants had similar cultural experiences while growing up.

Four of the participants stated they watched Spanish TV and listened to Spanish radio.

Some of their comments were:

I watched Spanish TV, especially with my parents. This was a time I could spend with them. They had to work, so we didn't have a lot of time together. This was our time.

And:

We grew up with Spanish music, with someone always playing music on their "ghetto" blasters, we called them that. So, somebody's parents would play that. We would watch the Spanish movies a lot, especially my dad on the weekend. We grew up with a lot of that.

One participant explained that while she didn't speak Spanish very well, she felt a certain pride when talking about her Puerto Rican culture. She explained:

My parents didn't want me speaking Spanish. They felt my brother and I needed to know English to make it here. Both my parents were born here in the United States. My mom actually learned Spanish from my dad. Although they have taught us words, we really didn't speak a lot of Spanish. That didn't mean we didn't have any Puerto Rican culture in our house. Dad had a lot of relatives in the area. For holidays we would spend it at home. Extended family would come over. Every Christmas we spent at our house. We all celebrated at home, New Years, Christmas, and all the holidays. We spent it in the back yard with a lot of BBQs. A lot of family involved, coming and going. It was such a good experience.

As some of the participants were talking about their own culture, they shared the differences as well. One participant felt there were inequities among the Latino

groups at his school. He was surprised because there were so few other Latinos around. He just assumed they would hang out more than they did. He explained:

It seemed my Mexican friends were given more opportunities than my Puerto Rican friends. We seemed to be at a lower level than the Mexicans at my high school. There were no other Hispanics around, just mostly blacks, Mexicans, and us. I thought the blacks in the neighborhood would be more with us, but they pretty much hung with themselves. It was kind of strange, you know. With so few Hispanics around, you would think the Mexicans and Puerto Ricans would band together. But, that just wasn't the case. You kind of just hung out with your neighborhood.

One female participant had a more global view of the differences among all Latinos. She saw differences from a regional perspective. She stated:

I certainly see many differences between our cultures. The other students from Central and South America are extremely diverse, and although we are often grouped into one category, people should remember that everything from traditions to vocabulary changes from region to region. Their values are so different from mine. Puerto Rican is very different than Mexican. Cuban is a world away from Puerto Rican. The history and the circumstances under which each group has come to the United States are also very different. Every group carries a different baggage.

One female explained that she simply didn't have much in common with the other groups.

I was acquainted with them but we didn't have a lot in common. We thought we could share things like culture, family and language, but as far as goals academically and socially even the kind of clothes we wore and the type of music we liked were a lot different.

Factors Influencing College Attendance

All of the participants stated that their parents were the most influential factor in deciding to attend college. The two males focused on their mothers while the three females talked more about both parents and the family in general. One of the males shared that his Mom was the one who always pushed him to go further . He was grateful because most of his friends didn't make it out of his neighborhood. He explained:

I was lucky I had a Mom who pushed me to be successful. My friends from the neighborhood didn't do so good. Three of them have died since grade school. Two more of them are serving time in prison. There are two of us who went to college. I was the first to get a college degree not only in my family but also with my friends. If it wasn't for her, I probably would have ended up just like them.

The other male was told that education was a way to get ahead and that he would have to take care of his family some day.

My parents also always pushed me to get ahead, in the economic sense as well. My mom always stressed that a good education would mean a better income and a more stable future. I could take care of my family. She never let me forget that.

Two of the females shared similar statements.

Seeing how great people can be when they are allowed to do what they truly want to do pushed me to search for my passion in college. My father taught me that. He felt I could do anything as long as I had an education. My mother taught me the passion to learn. Together, they influenced me to do my best.

One of the females talked more about her entire family's support and that going to college was more of an expectation.

My parents have worked very hard so we can pursue what we want to do. It would be a shame to not take the opportunity. My brother and my sister also look up to me a lot. I have the responsibility to provide a good example, so they can push themselves and exceed the example I have set.

Several of the participants also shared some negative factors related to influences on attending college. They were confronted with major obstacles while trying to decide about college. They received minimal assistance from the high schools, including school counselors and teachers. One female was told not to bother to come when they were doing testing at the school. She explained:

I didn't know what a PSAT was or I needed an ACT to get into college. On the day of testing, most of my friends were told to stay at home. It was more of an optional test and they really didn't need to take them. I was told to just come and do the best I could. I wasn't even told how I did on them. I finally found out when I started applying for schools and realized I needed them to apply. Luckily, I did well enough to get in.

The other male explained a similar situation at his high school with the lack of assistance from the school counselors. He felt no one really cared about helping him get to college. He knew he wanted to go, but didn't know the process. He asked for help, but no one seemed to offer any help. He stated, as he sat up straight in the chair:

I did all my own research for selecting a college. No one helped me. No counselors, no teachers. No one. I did it all on my own. Now look at me. I graduated. Serves them right. They didn't know what they had. Too bad for them. I just wish others didn't have to go through the same thing I did.

One of the females expressed a similar theme with no one really helping her. She felt her family was the only one supporting her but didn't have a clue about what to do for the college process.

My parents didn't know what the educational system was all about. No one told them. My Mom was telling me that education was the ticket out. We just didn't know what to do.

One male discussed his experiences with a high school counselor. He described a situation where he was told he wasn't good enough to attend a school of his choice, stating that a student like him usually doesn't go to schools like that, even though he was a top student with excellent grades and scores on standardized tests. He stated:

I remember one specific incident in my high school that I attended, the Jesuit high school. I met with my counselor first because my grandmother had just passed away and my parents wanted me to talk to the counselor at school. I didn't really feel that I had built a rapport with this guy but I went anyway because they wanted me to go, but I kind of wanted to switch from talking about family issues and talk more about my future in college. So I started talking about some programs and how I can take some more advance course load and the counselor asked what kind of colleges I was considering. So I said it would be really exciting to go to Northwestern. He said, well usually a student like you probably wouldn't be going to Northwestern. And then I kind of was taken back and I didn't. At first I wanted to address a student like me how because of my grades were good. I was in the top five percent of my class at my school. My income, my racial background, I don't know, I didn't know what he meant. So at that point I wrote that school off as a place that I didn't want to be at. But as far as encouragement, that was discouraging at such a young age. And I have other examples of that happening with teachers, counselors and even the principal at that school before.

College Experience (Clubs, Finances, Barriers)

Most of the participants explored the Latino clubs on campus while starting out. There were mixed reactions to how they felt about the experiences. Most of them stated that the clubs were more focused on Mexican traditions rather than being more welcoming to the other Latinos in the clubs. One of the males stated he tried at the beginning to become involved, but got turned off by the actions of the club.

I got involved with the Latino group on campus my freshman year. They were really focused more on Mexican culture than anything else. I was kind of turned off by the exclusiveness of the group. It seems the members were more into being in the group and didn't really pay attention to the new people. So, I just focused on other things.

One of the females had a similar experience with her club. She still participated, but felt like an outsider at times. She explained:

It wasn't a really good experience for me. The Latino groups seemed to be more focused on Mexican culture than anything else. I was a bit surprised. I was hoping for more connections with other Puerto Ricans. I did connect with some, so it turned out to be ok. We did our own thing when we needed to. I just felt like I didn't really belong, even though I thought we had so much in common.

One male couldn't get involved with any club because he lived at home. He had to commute to school to save money. He felt he couldn't get involved with outside activities because of work and time.

Since I have worked and been close to my job, I really only come here to do school. I can't say I spent a lot of time here after school. Probably the same argument I used when I went to high school. You know, I don't live here on campus, so me staying for a meeting at 5:30 means I

don't get home until 7:30 or 8 pm. I don't want to do that. So, I can't say I've invested in too much in looking for extracurricular activities.

All of the participants worked while attending college. They all had to work in order to pay for tuition, books, room and board, and spending money. There was one participant, who stated her family was upper middle class, but she also had three younger brothers and sisters her parents needed to take care of. She explained:

I work part time and full time during the summer to help pay for my tuition and living expenses. I pay for college mainly through scholarships.

One of the males explained that he had to work so much, he felt he was either working, going to class, studying, or sleeping. He had no time to socialize. There really was no time to play because he needed all the money to live and go to school.

I worked every term I was on campus. I worked at least one job at a time, sometimes two or three. The summer that I spent as a sophomore, I worked two jobs and I took a freelance job. So I took certain gigs when I needed to do it. I worked between 8-15 hours a week, and more on the weekends.

The other male was matter-of-fact. He stated:

I did work study. That and McDonalds. I walked to school and walked back to home. *There was no money. No money to spend on other things. No money.*

Some of the participants explained that financial constraints were a major barrier for themselves and other Latinos in obtaining a college degree. One female explained:

Economics is the biggest barrier while attending college, mainly because soon my parents will have two kids in university. Although it is a barrier, it only forces us to work a little harder. It has never, in any way, prevented us from pursuing an education. It has only meant that we had to struggle a little more to get what we wanted.

One of the males talked about how he would leave school to save money and would return once financial matters were settled.

If for some reason my family faced money problems that we couldn't handle, I would leave college until they were resolved and go back as soon it was possible. I had to do this in between my sophomore and junior year. I took a semester off to help with the bills and stuff. It wasn't a big deal. I wanted to help. But I also know I would go back, and I did.

Two participants also discussed how the family could be a barrier for Latinos.

One female talked about one of her friends in college who left school.

Parents can become the tool that forces Latinos to get out of school because they are demanding so much. They don't understand the dynamics of it. That's a problem to educate the parents. I had such supportive parents. My friend, who was also Puerto Rican, didn't make it. She had to leave because her parents forced her. They didn't like her being away from home so much. She still comes up to visit me, but she works at home now.

One male explained that his family didn't understand he had to study so much and still work. Although his family was supportive, they didn't quite understand all the aspects of what it takes to complete the education.

You need to sacrifice things to get that education. Family can become the worst enemy in the United States. They will criticize you and don't understand what you are doing. I kept asking, 'What the hell am I doing this for?' I had to work, study, work to make money. I have to

constantly remind them what I am doing. I have to keep sight of what the goal is, to succeed.

Success in College

All of the participants had a variety of responses to what success meant to them. Some felt that graduating was the most important aspect of success. Others felt that having their family proud of their accomplishments was enough. Still others reflected on just getting by each class, getting the assignments in on time, and just working hard for a good grade. One male explained:

You know, success, it means getting your assignments in on time, getting the grade you worked for. I mean, working hard towards something and accomplishing it, that's success in self.

Another male stated:

I would have to say just graduating, reaching that goal. I went to a community school for junior college and then I transferred to a four-year college. I commuted to junior college, but lived on the campus at the regular school. I feel I am successful because I made it.

One of the females centered more on her family. She explained:

I think success just meant making my family proud. Like that could be an undercurrent right there. What else is there?

What Needs to Happen

All of the participants were very detailed in their responses. They wanted to provide as much information as possible to share with others. They wanted to make

sure others could benefit from their own experiences. The females were very expressive and animated when elaborating on what other females need to do. All three had similar views on the topic. One explained how a Latina needs to have one focus, and that is her education.

I think that a lot of times when you go to school you are so used to prejudices against Latinos or discriminate against Latinos, but more so with the Latinas. Just because you are Latina you automatically go into it with that fear. I say go into your education wanting your education and focus on your education and try and get everything else out of your mind as much as possible.

Another describes how a lot of females don't make it because they weren't ready to fight for what they believed in. Most females got distracted and didn't stay focused, she believed.

You have to fight. You don't have to show up. You don't have to do your homework. You don't have to buy the book. You don't have to do anything. You have to fight apathy. [laughter] Yeah, you have to fight apathy. You have to get your will power going. I think most students who have stayed proved that they have the will power. A lot of kids I know are gone because they didn't have it. I can't tell you how many kids I have met. I see them one semester and I never see them again.

The other female shared similar feelings. She also stated that females needed to adjust and learn new rules of getting what they wanted.

Learn to play the game. It's like chess. Learn the rules even if they go against you. Learn the rules. In the long run, you will benefit. If you want to move up, you gotta play the rules.

She went on to say that most females needed to give up or put aside their own cultural identity in order to reach their goals. However, she felt you also couldn't lose who you were:

I think identity is so important. You don't realize it or are aware of it until you come here. Because all along you grow up in this environment where we're all minorities, it's us vs. them. And you come here and it's, "Where is us, where are we?" It's all them and me. You find yourself here. You don't know who you are anymore. You are who you are because of where you come from. And that's where you go. And I think a lot of people are scared of losing their identity. And that is maybe why they don't come to school. They need to remember to never lose who they are. They can play the game, but never lose that one thing about who you are.

One of the males wanted to make sure other Puerto Ricans knew to do what he did. He didn't learn these strategies until college and he said he learned them the hard way. However, he made it even though it went against everything he knew before. He stated:

You need to sit in front of the class and take notes. You have to get to know the professor. You need to make sure they know your face and know who you are. You have that kind of duty to write the paper. It has to mean something to you. I never knew this. I just sat in the back, not needing to know anybody but my friends. I learned the hard way. The teachers want you to ask questions, they want you to interact.

South American

There were three males and two females who participated in the study. Two were Brazilian and three were Colombian. All five were born in their countries and came to the United States within the past fifteen years. One was a senior, three were in

graduate school, and one had recently graduated from college. The three Colombians spoke fluent Spanish, while the two Brazilians spoke Portuguese. The Brazilians also mentioned that they had a working knowledge of Spanish. One even spoke fluent Spanish. The reason Brazilians were used in this study is because they self-identify themselves as Latino. Although Spanish is not their first language, the university where they came from categorized Brazilians as Latino/Hispanic. All five reported they were bilingual. Most of the participants' parents had at least some college, with three mothers and two fathers having graduate school experience. Only one father was reported to have not received a high school diploma. All of the participants reported their family income to be over \$60,000.

Background (Neighborhood, Family)

The South Americans spoke favorably about their home life growing up. All five moved to the United States when they were young. When they came, most were placed in either the same grade level or one level below. The main reason some were placed at a level below was because of their English skills. All of the participants grew up in relatively White neighborhoods. There was minimal interaction with other Latinos, and especially South Americans. They were considered Latino by the neighbors and schools. Once settled, all of the South Americans excelled in school. All of them achieved academic success; however, their pathways were a little different. One male explained:

We were fortunate. My family could afford to pay for school in Brazil, so we went to very good schools. You know, we could afford for playing on the athletic teams, so. It was good. I had a good time. I worked hard, but it didn't feel like it. And then, when we came to the United States, I was about 11 years old. My brother was 1 1/2 years younger. So, it was just the 3 of us. The first place we came to live in was Minnesota. You go from Brazil to Minnesota. [laughter] It was quite different. Right before high school, we went to a private school. My school was tiny. There were maybe 25 kids in my graduating class. We all knew each other really well. I was the only Brazilian. I was, in fact, the only minority in the school. It was pretty white, upper middle class. But, I couldn't feel any different. I didn't feel out of place in the school. It wasn't a problem at all.

Two of the females explained how they grew up in the suburbs of Chicago.

They both expressed great satisfaction in being near the top in their classes and taking full advantage of all the opportunities the school had to offer. The neighborhoods were not diverse, but were very supportive. One stated:

I grew up in a suburb of Chicago. There weren't that many other Colombians around. It was your typical upper middle class place. I went to a really good high school. It was college prep. Not a lot of other Hispanics, or Blacks for that matter. There were mostly Whites and Asians. But, we really didn't look at that. In school, I had an opportunity to take a lot of AP courses. They had sports. It was a good environment to be in. All the teachers knew all the students very well. I had a lot of opportunities. The school, the neighborhood, it was great. I had a lot of friends.

One male explained how his family supported him in adjusting to an American school. He stated:

I had to learn how to speak the language or I wouldn't be able to do anything. I was immersed in the language. And, my grandma planned on going with me for the first month to help out. But, she went with me the first 2 days then she stopped going. She wanted me to be there and experience everything. She wanted me to learn so I wouldn't depend on

her. So I figured out how to go up to the lunch line and get a meal. I went from there. The kids played soccer, which was something I was good at. I couldn't speak the language, but I could get around a soccer field. The kids started teaching me words, and I started teaching them soccer. I think my grandma knew what she was doing. I had to learn for myself how to survive.

Culture (Experiences, Differences)

The South Americans were very proud of their culture and who they were.

Four stated they were not American citizens. Most of them felt they were bi-cultural.

One female explained:

I am Colombian first. That is my heritage, my culture. However, I am also American. I grew up in two different worlds; the world at home and the world outside of home. Outside, I speak English to all my friends, except at times with some of my Hispanic friends. I do typical American things; eat American food, and see American movies, things like that. Within my home, I speak Spanish. We don't listen to a lot of Spanish radio or TV. We think it is still American TV, even though it is Mexican or whatever. It just isn't the same as back home (in Colombia). I came here when I was eleven, so I remember a lot from back home. We had a lot of celebrations that just weren't recognized here. The one thing I also noticed was the food eaten here. Colombian food is not spicy, like other Latin food. My Mom makes the best ajiaco. It is a kind of stew with potatoes and chicken and things like that. It is so good.

Another male explained:

I try to stay connected by reading as much as possible about back home. I have magazines from Colombia, things like that. I want to stay current with what is happening there. My culture means so much to me. When I came to America, my family wanted a better life. We never forgot our traditions, even if there were so few other Colombians around.

Most of the South Americans didn't expand on differences between Latinos.

They all stated there were differences, but did not elaborate on those differences.

There were a few statements through-out the interviews that touched on the area. One male explained a situation that occurred in school about being a Latino. He stated:

It was kind of funny. It was nearing the fifth of May. One of my teachers asked me how we could celebrate cinco de mayo. It was my freshman year. I simply stated I was Colombian and didn't know anything about how to celebrate it. I said I didn't know many Mexicans and it was their holiday, not mine. I didn't take offense to it or anything. I thought it was more funny than anything else. You know, do I ask every Asian student what Chinese New Year symbol are they using? It kind of struck me how different Colombians are to other Hispanics.

Another male explained his thoughts through playing sports. He stated:

This is what it's about for me. Playing soccer with my Brazilian friends is completely different than playing with my other Latino friends. They play for a reason and they're good. If I'm playing with Brazilians, even if they are not as good, they enjoy it a different way. They see the game in a different way, the little intricacies of the game. It was nice. Probably my most enjoyable part is playing soccer with them (other Brazilians) and just kidding around with them. They understand my jokes. Just kicking around.

A female expressed a difference among Latinos dealing with work. She felt some of her Latino friends had to work to stay in school while she worked just for spending money. She explained:

The jobs that most Latinos have, they have to stay in college. You have to work, you have to study, take tests, and go to class. It can take its toll on you. A lot of my Mexican and Puerto Rican friends have this problem. They don't have enough time in the day to work, go to school and study. There is no downtime. I, and some of my Colombian

friends, don't necessarily have to work. I work for spending money. One of my friends who is Mexican must work to pay for his tuition. His family can't afford school.

Factors Influencing College Attendance

All of the South Americans responded in a similar way when asked about factors that influenced their attendance in college. All five participants stated the greatest factor in going to college was their parents. As one Latina stated;

It was my parents. They kept after me to go further in life. They are both professionals and education has always been stressed. That is why we moved to the United States in the first place. My parents wanted a better life for us. They were pretty well off in Colombia. They always taught us to do the best we could and to always reach for the stars. We were expected to not only go to college, but to graduate school as well.

Two males further stated that their mothers (and in one case grandmother) were the most influential in being able to attend college. They stated:

My mom was the focal point of my education. She was the biggest influence.

And:

My mother and grandmother, they were always on me to do my best. They had the highest expectation of me. Don't get me wrong, my father was great. He worked a lot to provide for his family. It's just that my mom and grandmother always pushed me.

The South Americans were the only group through all of the interviews to have all the participants single out their high schools as another influencing factor. All five

stated they attended exceptional high schools. They all had counselors assisting with the college process and had teachers encouraging them to go to specific schools. One

Latino stated:

It was good. I came from a really good school. It was college prep. I had an opportunity to take a lot of AP courses. They had sports. It was a good environment to be in. All the teachers knew all the students very well. I had classes that had 5 or 6 people in it. It was really nice. The counselors would meet with you throughout your four years, talking about what classes you were going to take for the next year. It was really something. In fact, my counselor helped me get more financial aid and scholarships.

Another Latina stated:

It was just expected. It was kind of expected anyway, from my parents to the school counselors to the teachers to the neighborhood. All the students from my school, it's not whether or not you were going to college but more of what schools you were going to look at and get into.

One Latina stated that all of her friends were going to college. She explained:

There was a one hundred percent rate for attending college from my high school. All my classmates went to college. It was very competitive. They went all over the United States to really good schools. It was where you were going, not if. You went there if you were serious about your education or if you had a lot of money. Some of the people were there if they could afford it.

College Experiences (Clubs, Finances, Barriers)

The South Americans have enjoyed their college experiences. They all stated that they have faced minimal opposition culturally and felt prepared, both

academically and socially. The only negative experiences or barriers shared by any of the participants came from two males. No one commented on any identifiable struggles while attending college. They all stated they have done well academically, with everyone having earned a B average or better. One male did have some frustrations with the bureaucracy of the college:

The inefficiency of the college. You are dealing with the administration that doesn't get anything done. Then it gets to be too much. It's hard to come back 4 or 5 times to get your financial aid to get figured out.

Another stated that it can be frustrating when you don't get the classes you want:

There are so many things to deal with. I don't know. It's hard to get into certain classes. You may to stay at the university longer than expected. The financial burden gets more if you have to stay.

The financial burden of college for the South Americans was similar for the participants. All of the respondents stated either their parents paid for the majority of the costs, or they received scholarships and student loans. Most worked, but only for spending money and work ethics, and not out of necessity. As one female explained:

Some through loans, some my parents helped me. My family helped me, mostly. I worked here and there. But I worked mostly so I could have spending money. I also received certain scholarships. It was a good division of everything.

Another stated:

My parents have paid for most of college. I have a part time job so I can learn the value of my education.

One female, who has gone on to graduate school, stated:

I received scholarships to go here. I live on campus and it is all paid for. I came from an excellent high school where most students get academic scholarships. I did pretty well, so I received a lot. I even get extra for some spending money. My undergraduate experience, I really didn't pay for anything. My graduate experience, I am starting to have to take out some loans, but nothing serious, yet.

Most of the South Americans were involved in a lot of clubs and organizations.

Some were Latino based, but most were involved with clubs from their majors or service oriented. They are felt somewhat connected to the main Latino organization on campus. A female explained:

LARES is a great place. It is welcoming and is for everyone. Even though I am Colombian, I can still relate to a lot of what they are doing. We speak a little different kind of Spanish, we still get along. They are so helpful. They helped me get some more money. And they provide a lot of activities targeted to the Hispanic community here. I have met a lot of different Hispanics through LARES, so I am glad I am a part of it.

Both Brazilians described themselves as Latino. Even though Spanish was not their first language, they affiliate themselves with the Latino organization on campus.

One commented that she was fluent in Spanish, having stated:

I can speak three languages, English, Portuguese, and Spanish. I felt I needed to learn all three in order to prepare myself for my career in medicine. I can relate to others. Besides, I think being Brazilian is being Latina; the language is one part of it. There are so many other facets to being Latina, like food, music, family, things like that. I have

more in common with other Latinos than I do with White, African Americans, and Asians. There are people I can bond with.

One male stated:

I just consider myself a Latino. If they want to break it up to different Latinos, like South American, Mexican, whatever, that's fine. I just consider myself a Latino.

One male had an experience during college that changed his attitude about himself and the way he viewed his culture. When he came to the United States, he assimilated into the dominant culture. Although he loved his culture, he began to adopt American ways. He continued on until an experience during his sophomore year. He explained:

It was the most interesting part is finding other Brazilians here. You know. It's weird that it worked out this way. I met a couple of Brazilians wearing a warm-up jacket. It says Brazilian on it. I would wear it and I met other Brazilians just by wearing it. There is also a professor here that does a lot of work in Brazil. So, he knew a lot of the Brazilians here. He knew a lot of the Brazilians' shops in the area so if I needed to know something or just needed to talk, he was there. If I needed to know of a shop or where to go dance, he would help. There is a neat shop at such and such place. We would have talks about such and such topic. I got connected with him sophomore year. It was different living in Rockford. We knew a couple of Brazilians in Rockford, but it was just different. It was hard. There weren't a lot there. It was hard to network. There was nothing tailored for Brazilians. So, besides soccer, it was hard to meet Brazilians. It's strange. I completely forgot how to be a Brazilian until I came to college. After hanging out with my Brazilian friends, it all came back.

This male found himself by recognizing and reconnecting with what he felt he had lost. When he began talking about this experience, his whole body language

changed. The male became more animated, his voice became excited, and he began to smile. He was excited to be sharing his moment. He explained:

I couldn't believe I had forgotten who I was. I took my girlfriend back to Brazil so she could see and experience who I was and am. I was able to show her the beauty of my life and how our two cultures could mix. See, she is White. It was such a great time.

Success in College

The dominant theme for success with the South Americans was academic achievement. All of the participants focused on the need to achieve high grades in order to move on. No one discussed the idea of making more money or helping out with the family. Two males stated:

Well, first coming here I would say success means getting straight A's. I mean, flat out. Because the program that I am in is so intense, people who are here are so into getting into med school. The focus is getting as many classes and as many A's possible as quick as possible.

And:

Going here getting a broad education, I think success means learning. Learning something that you are interested in and being able to apply it, to something that you want to do. The grades are what matters, though. Without the grades, you can't do anything else.

One female did mention how grades related to career goals. She stated:

Success to me is to get as much out of the 4 years as possible. I figured if you put enough work, you will get the grades you deserve. You will have success in grades. If you want to do it, not matter how much money you make, you will be happy. Isn't that what success is? There

is a spot in society for whatever you want to do, so you'll be successful for your career goals. So getting the most out of everything is what success means to me.

What Needs to Happen

All of the participants expressed the need to enjoy college, and take advantage of the opportunities that are presented to most students. They all expressed the desire to make the best of the situation. One female stated:

I could have graduated early, but I talked with people who did. What is the rush? I want to go to med school. But everything we do in undergrad, the experience, having the jobs and having to do jobs in classes, going to parties, playing sports, varsity and intramural. These things we won't get in medical school. I wanted to be able to take classes that I wanted to, and a major that I wanted, and get the most out of the education.

One male went further and expressed the need to help one another. He felt college was also a time to learn about sharing, helping each other out. He explained:

My roommate freshman year, he had a hard time. He was from Mexico. He always talked about his opportunity to get a great education. It has been a hard road for him, financially and emotionally. However, he has made it and is trying to go on to medical school. I told him, this is how you should practice for testing. I got someone to get him books. It is all about sharing. He did all this hard work, but he had the chance.

Another male explains about money and opportunity:

It's all about opportunity. Here if we work hard we can have that kind of stuff. In Brazil, it's not like that. If you don't have money, you don't have the opportunity. It's one of the positives here. It's not easy, but we have the opportunity.

A female explained that if a person is willing to make the sacrifices (studying, working hard), she can graduate. She stated:

You are kind of pampered in high school. Everything is done for you. In college, it's not like that. College, it's all you. It's what you make it. If you want to go, and you are willing to make the sacrifices, you will make it. If you want to go and have fun, you are not going to last too long. You have to work at it. You have to study. You have to make choices.

Summary

The focus of this chapter was to provide the findings of the interviews. Twenty Latino participants from different subgroups were asked to complete a background survey, and then be interviewed. A series of questions were asked each of the participants independently that focused on six different areas: background (neighborhood and family); culture (experience and differences among the subgroups); factors that may influence college attendance; college experiences (involvement in clubs and organizations, finances, and barriers they faced); defining what success in college means to them; and what advice can they give to other Latinos and the general educational system. The responses are verbatim from the participants, including their nonverbal communication when available.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Overview of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine and understand Latino College students' sub-cultures and how their cultural integration can affect their retention and completion of a baccalaureate degree. Also, this study sought to understand the cultural factors that influenced student retention. The research questions that served to guide and inform this study and the responses are listed below.

1. What differences, if any, are there between students from Latino cultures who have been living in the United States?

This question is best understood through the themes that emerged from the interviews and data collected. The participants provided meaning to their individual cultures and subgroups. They discussed insights that led to general themes in which they perceived as being different from the other groups. This supports Frisby and Lorenzo-Luaces's (2000) belief that Latinos are aware of cultural differences among Latino groups. Some of the major themes included academic preparation, growing up in a variety of neighborhoods, celebrating traditions, appreciating Latino foods,

dealing with financial obligations, and understanding the meaning of success in college.

Academic Preparation

There was a major difference between the South Americans' academic preparation and the preparation of the Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban participants. The findings from the South Americans support Bourdieu's (1986) assumptions about cultural capital. Specifically, he believed that students from upper middle class backgrounds (family and neighborhood) were not questioned whether they would be going to college. The real question was where the student was going. This was stated by two of the participants and their high schools' expectation of them attending college. Gandara (1995) also found that if the Latinos attended a school outside their barrios and attended schools that were predominately white and middle to upper middle class, they would attain further education. This was supported by a comment made by one of the Mexican males. While he was able to "escape" his neighborhood and attend a magnet school, most of his friends stayed behind and didn't obtain a college degree. All of the South Americans attended either private schools or strong academic schools. The Cubans mostly attended parochial schools. The Mexican and Puerto Rican participants mainly went to public high schools in an urban setting. Even though these last two groups of participants didn't fit their cultural "mold," they still had the ambition and internal drive to attend and complete college.

While ambition for the participants was important, there still were barriers in high school the Mexican and Puerto Rican participants had to encounter. One of the major barriers was the lack of support from the high school counselors. The Cuban and South American participants who attended parochial schools had a great deal of support, and followed Bourdieu's (1986) findings. However, those students that attended public schools had a difficult time receiving support for their ambitions. One Puerto Rican participant explained about his ordeal of wanting to attend a prestigious college, yet the school counselor informed him that students like him don't go to schools like that. The participant didn't go back to the counselor. Another Puerto Rican participant was told not to worry about the ACT tests coming up. Most of the participant's Puerto Rican friends were, he felt, told to stay home or just not come for the testing. He wasn't given any preparation or given the results until he needed the scores to apply to college.

The Mexican participants discussed more of how low the expectations were from the high school teachers and administration. Most of the participants came from schools that were predominately Mexican, and had very high attrition rates. The expectation was to try and finish high school. There was very little discussion or encouragement to attend college.

Neighborhoods

The findings indicated that the participants came from a variety of neighborhoods and were exposed to culturally diverse communities. The South

Americans all came from upper middle class neighborhoods in the suburbs of a large metropolitan city. They all mentioned that while they were one of the few Latinos in their neighborhoods, they never lost touch with their cultural heritage. Most of the Cuban participants also mentioned that they were one of the few Cubans in their neighborhood. However, the major difference between the South Americans and Cubans was socioeconomic status. The Cubans were mostly in very poor neighborhoods, surrounded by other ethnic minorities. Although there were few Cubans around, they all had the Cuban community in the area for support. The participants all stated that they were able to sustain their culture because of their strong ties with the Cuban community at large.

The Mexicans indicated their neighborhoods were sometimes violent. Most stated that there were other Mexicans as well as other ethnic minorities living in the areas. The Puerto Ricans came from neighborhoods that were mostly other Puerto Ricans. They came from lower income families, and the community was also low income. The one exception came from a middle class suburb, who was one of the few Puerto Ricans in his neighborhood.

Celebrating Traditions

Each of the participants discussed how their own subgroups' traditions were celebrated differently than other Latinos. This became most evident when they shared how each of them celebrated the major holidays. The Cubans spoke of celebrating Christmas on the 24th of December, whereas the Mexicans began their celebration on

the 25th and continued until January 6th, which is the day of the Three Kings. Another example is how each of the subgroups places importance on the passage to adulthood for Latinas. For Cubans, the passage happens when they turn fifteen. For Mexicans, the passage to adulthood happens when the Latina turns sixteen.

One incident a South American shared was when he had first come to the United States. He was the only Latino in the classroom. When it came to the 5th of May, the teacher asked him how his family celebrated “cinco de mayo.” He had no idea what this meant. The others assumed since he was Latino that he would naturally celebrate the Mexican-American holiday.

Food

Food has always been a focal point in Latino culture. The Latino family celebrates traditions with food. Although most non-Latinos believe all Latino food is the same, some of the participants stated that Latinos could always tell other Latinos apart by what they ate. Food was mentioned by three of the four subgroups as being one of the major differences between Latino subgroups. One Cuban gave an example of how beans were made at her Mexican friend’s house. She did not understand until later that Mexicans cooked very differently than her family.

This further supports Frisby and Lorenzo-Luaces’s (2000) findings that Latinos know there are cultural differences between their subgroups. They may have difficulty expressing what those differences are, but they know they exist.

Finances

The survey illustrated a wide range of incomes from each of the subgroups. The Puerto Ricans had the lowest overall income, with three participants having a family income of under \$20,000. This placed a heavy burden on the participants as they attended school. One Puerto Rican had to drop out of school for a semester so he could make more money to continue his education. This is in contrast to the South Americans, who all had a family income of over \$60,000. All of the South Americans did not have to work, but some made the choice of working while going to school to have extra spending money. The Mexicans also had to work to stay in school. Some of the participants made the decision to stay at home to save more money and help with household duties. The Cubans, reporting the same levels of income as the Mexicans, also worked. However, the biggest difference between these two groups was the amount of financial aid and support the Cubans received. The Cuban students knew more about financial aid, including scholarships, grants, and student loans. This supported the notion that Cubans have a strong community network and are able to support one another (Arbona & Novy, 1991; Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Ginorio & Huston, 2001; Ortiz, 1986).

The responses also supported the concept by Hurtado (1994), Garcia (2000), Perna (2000) and others that Latinos may believe it is their obligation to contribute to the family income and are more likely to be employed full-time while attending college.

Success

The definition of success in college had the most variety of responses from each of the subgroups. The main difference between the subgroups was the concept of giving back to one's community versus getting good grades to graduate. Three of the subgroups were more centered on the family, where as one subgroup centered more on the academic success of the individual. The South Americans were more internal in their concept of success. The Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans defined success more in terms of the external factors, such as what they give back to their families and communities. In contrast, the South Americans all focused on academic achievement. The responses centered on receiving better grades, learning the course work to do better, and making it to graduation. The successful Latino received good grades and graduated.

The Cuban participants talked more of being proud of what they achieved and having their families being proud of their accomplishments. The motivation to succeed was more of what the family achieved than what the individual achieved. The accomplishments of the individual Cuban student were overshadowed by how the family was perceived by the Cuban community. Success meant being a Cuban professional who could give back to the Cuban community. The Mexican participants discussed more of giving back to their communities and having careers that they love. The grades were never mentioned in anyone's responses. The Mexicans felt that success in college meant other Mexicans could benefit from their achievements. The Puerto Ricans were varied in their responses, ranging from family pride to graduating.

Their main emphasis was more on how to improve oneself to make their families proud of them. The successful Puerto Rican would graduate from college, work hard to support the family, and possibly give back to the community.

2. Do the differences in Latinos continue within college – do Latino students bring their culture with them to the college setting?

The findings suggested that Latinos continue with their culture into the college setting. Most of the participants felt they always had support from their family members and own networks. They still celebrated their own traditions and kept their cultural attitudes intact. However, some of the participants felt as though they had to adapt and sacrifice some of those cultural attitudes in order to succeed.

All of the participants shared how they kept up with their own particular cultural attitudes and beliefs. While most shared that they watched Spanish TV or listened to Latin music, some went further in their explanation of how they kept in touch with their heritage. Some read as much literature as possible, while others turned to their religion to garner support. Most of the participants were bilingual, with only two participants not being able to speak Spanish. The language, incidentally, was never mentioned as a cultural necessity by any participant.

One Mexican participant shared an experience within a classroom. He had to change his cultural attitudes on authority in order to survive in a particular class. He was failing a course and didn't understand why. The Mexican's instructor confronted him about his lack of participation in the classroom. The instructor felt the individual

was not interacting in the classroom because the student never challenged the instructor. The Mexican tried to explain that he was taught never to question authority, especially teachers. He was also taught never to be confrontational with others. His instructor had to explain that in the college setting, students were expected to challenge and confront others to learn. He was told he either had to change or fail the course. He knew he had to set aside his cultural attitudes if he was going to succeed in school. Although he had to adapt to his surroundings, the participant felt he couldn't let go of his cultural roots. He still would respect those in authority and would only challenge when it was necessary.

One South American stated he didn't realize he had lost some of his cultural heritage until he met other Brazilians during his sophomore year. He said he had found himself again, remembering traditions and customs he had forgotten since coming to the United States when he was eleven. He had grown accustomed to the American culture and had set aside his Brazilian culture because there were no other Brazilians around. His mother had kept up with some traditions and values, but for the most part, he felt he had assimilated into the majority culture. When he did meet other Brazilians, he started eating Brazilian foods, shopping at Brazilian stores, and playing his most loved sport, soccer. He found others who thought and acted like him.

These statements about culture tended to support the model on ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1993). The Brazilian participant followed Phinney's (1993) continuous line, going from the unexamined ethnic identity (accepting the dominant's cultural values and attitudes), to ethnic identity achievement (understanding his own

ethnic identity). Other participants shared similar experiences of having to accept some of the dominant's cultural attitudes and beliefs in order to succeed in a particular class or situation. However, most of the participants followed up with statements that supported their own ethnic identity achievement.

3. Do Latino students assimilate with the mainstream or retain their "given" culture?

The findings in this study suggested that Latinos retain their culture and do not fully assimilate into the mainstream culture while in the college setting. Although some of the participants (two of the South Americans, one Puerto Rican, and one Mexican) stated they had to sacrifice some of their culture in order to succeed in college, the majority of the participants held on to their cultural values and beliefs and were successful in the college environment.

Cultural Integration

Although Tinto (1975, 1987) revealed that students' cultural backgrounds are irrelevant to their successful collegiate experience, this research indicated that students' cultural identity may influence their completion of higher education. Most of the participants cited their cultural values, such as family, as the leading factor in why they continued their education and completed college. The participants stated they had to adjust culturally to the new college environment and had to learn how to adapt. However, they also indicated they never lost their own identity. This supports the

findings of Suarez & Fowers (1997), who suggested that when Latinos perceive themselves to be bicultural, they have a tendency to feel more supported by their families. This may indicate that the environmental factor encourages Latino students to stay in school.

All of the participants talked about having pride in their Latino culture. They were able to identify certain traits and values that they perceived were from their own specific sub-culture. An example of cultural pride was when many of the participants discussed the importance of food in their respective culture. They discussed how differently other Latinos prepared and ate their food. It is interesting to note that many of the participants in all of the groups had sporadic knowledge of their culture. This coincides with Keefe and Padilla (1987), Arbona (1991) and Rodríguez and Bernstein (1995) that Latinos can be bicultural with a variety of specific traits missing from both cultures.

Most of the participants tended to support the Bicultural Orientation Model (Torres, 1999). All of the participants, whether Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, or South American, were proud of their own cultures. They shared individual customs and values that they felt were part of who they were. They were also able to thrive in the college environment as well.

One Mexican stated that while he was proud of who he was, he had to adapt to what the American teachers wanted instead of what he was used to. Although he struggled at first, he was able to live in two cultures and still succeed.

4. In what ways, if any, did their own current culture influence the experiences, retention, and successful completion by Latino college students?

The findings suggested that each of the participants' cultures influenced their educational experiences, especially at the collegiate level. This was most evident in the responses involving factors that influenced college attainment and barriers while in college. This study also provided insight into why retention models are important in understanding college Latino students.

Parent Involvement

The findings suggested the most influential factor in obtaining an education is the parent. All of the participants stated their parents were the most influential factor in obtaining a college degree. This was the only response where all twenty participants answered the same way. All stated that because of their parents' belief that education is the way to success, they all felt support from home. The support came in various forms. Most Latino parents did not understand the educational process in the United States. However, they knew a college education could only help their children.

The response of parents being the most influential factor in educational success demonstrated the Latino cultural belief that family always comes first. Each participant shared a story of how either one parent, or both, played such a pivotal role in their education. One Mexican stated that his mother always pushed him, saying he had to get an education. The startling fact for this particular situation was the mother

was a single parent who had the equivalent of a high school education. They didn't know the process of applying for financial aid or even how to select a college. All they knew was that education was a means of succeeding. A Puerto Rican shared a similar story on how her parents always knew she would be the first to go to college.

This study further suggests that universities and colleges need to concentrate on the family when recruiting Latinos. Because the parent is such an integral factor in driving the Latino student into education, efforts should focus on informing the parents to all of the elements of college, including academic preparation and financial aid. Family members should participate in the entire application process. To make the environment more welcoming, universities need to establish on-campus groups for Latinos (Ginorio & Huston, 2001; Valverde & Scribner, 2001).

Barriers

The barriers the each of the Latino subgroups faced while trying to obtain educational success were widespread. One Cuban discussed how her parents didn't speak any English. She had to be the translator for every situation, including teacher conferences while growing up. Her parents couldn't read the applications for school, or understand the college process.

One Mexican participant explained the family was both a major support and a major barrier in graduating from college. The family placed a lot of pressure for the Mexican to come home every weekend. She had family obligations at home, and the family expected her to both achieve at college and fulfill her chores at home. A Puerto

Rican female shared similar experiences with her parents being too demanding. They wanted her at home, but also wanted her to work to help support the family as well. This supported the research that Latinas may have a more difficult time at college due to the traditional roles of the family (Ginorio and Huston, 2001). Another Mexican stated that he didn't have many friends from his neighborhood go to college. There was minimal support and encouragement from his peers.

Most of the participants stated that economics was another major barrier in obtaining a degree. One Latina stated that a lot of her friends simply couldn't afford to go to school, even with financial aid. Even the South Americans, who had the finances to attend school, stated that Latinos constantly struggle with balancing the finances of education with the obligations of the family.

Another barrier that some of the participants encountered was the lack of support from their secondary teachers and counselors. One participant cited an incident where he wanted to attend a prestigious university. The counselor informed him that students like him didn't attend universities like that. Other participants, mostly Mexican and Puerto Ricans, experienced similar situations while in high school.

Retention

This study was not intended to verify one type of retention model. However, most of the Latinos interviewed in this study followed Bean and Metzner's (1985) Nontraditional Student Attrition model of retention. The Latino participants in this

study did not indicate any sentiment towards institutional commitment, which is a critical factor in Tinto's (1975, 1993) retention model. The Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans in this study were influenced by external factors, such as finances and support from family members. This was clearly demonstrated with the lack of involvement with extra-curricular activities. Most of the participants were not involved with the Latino organizations on campus. The non-Mexicans felt excluded from the groups because it was mainly Mexican-focused. A few also felt that because they weren't native Spanish speakers, they were also not welcomed. This feeling of not being welcome can have a major impact on the student's commitment to the institution.

The concept that students involved with extracurricular activities are more likely to stay in school than are those not involved in these activities (Davalos & Chavez, 1999) was not supported with the Latino participants in this study. Most were not involved in extra-curricular activities because they either had to work or chose not to participate. This again tends to support Bean and Metzner's (1985) model that external factors are critical on the subject of retention for Latino students.

Another external factor was the aspect of working to pay for school. Most of the participants, excluding South Americans, had to work in order to go to school. The South Americans did work, but mostly for extra spending money. The other three subgroups worked in order to pay for tuition, books, and living expenses. This took time away from being a part of the school and becoming more committed to the

institution. This supports Kraemer's (1993) belief that students who need to work have a more difficult time with the concept of institutional commitment.

The Needs of Latinos

The participants provided general needs for how Latinos could become successful in higher education as well as what educational institutions could do to enhance the Latino attainment of a college education.

1. There need to be more role models and mentors for Latinos, especially for the women. Students need to seek out and have a personal connection with an adult outside of their family, especially with a professor who believes in them. They need to ask questions and make sure others notice what they have to say. Ginorio & Huston (2001) supported the need for more Latino professionals (teachers, counselors) to share and role model for the Latino student. "What we need are people in every sector at every level addressing the needs of Hispanic students as they work to support a quality education for all children" (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2000).
2. *Latinos need to set high expectations of themselves. They need to establish goals early in their education and stay with it, no matter what the obstacles. They need to be forceful in their pursuit of education, and not let others put them down just because they are Latino.*

3. Latinos may feel the need to sacrifice their culture in order to succeed in the college community. While they do not need to lose their cultural heritage, they do need to learn how to sacrifice or compromise for the time while they are in school in order to move ahead.
4. Latinos need to seek out as many educational opportunities as possible. Even though they may not understand college admission practices or financial aid, they must demand that school administrators provide the necessary information. Some of this information should also be in Spanish for the parents to understand the process. Even though the student is the one attending college, the parents and family are the major support. If the parents only speak Spanish, then the colleges and secondary schools need to provide the assistance necessary for the parents to be as involved as possible.
5. High school and elementary school counselors and teachers need to encourage educational attainment among all Latino students from an early age. The counselors need to encourage Latinos to enroll in more advanced classes while still in high school and not settle for mediocrity.
6. More programs are needed that emphasize the Latino subgroup experience. This may include *specialized training for staff who deals with Latinos and their experiences*. Cameron and Heckman (2001) stated that if more long-term policies were in place to deal with the inexperience of the faculty to handle minority issues and the institution's ability to handle the academic short-falls of Latinos, other short-term practices would not be needed.

7. Not all Latinos fit into a model. Institutions need to treat Latinos as individuals, not as one major grouping. There are so many subgroups within the Latino community, such as Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and so on. There are also regional differences between each of the subgroups. For instance, Mexicans from the Southwest have different traditions and values than those Mexicans that are from the Midwest. There are also differences between generations of Latinos. Is the Latino a 1st generation who is attending college for the first time, or is it a 4th generation Latino who has had several relatives attend college?

Recommendations for Further Study

The findings in this research indicate that there is no simple answer to retention for Latino students. The factors related to cultural integration, retention, and successful completion are complex. There are more questions that need to be answered to fully understand the issues related to Latino students. Some of those questions are mentioned below.

1. Is there a cultural difference among the Latino subgroup experiences? The sub-cultural differentiation between Latino students needs to be further explored. Although there were cultural similarities with the participants' responses, such as strong family values and pride in their culture, there were many differences the participants could not voice during the interview, but just knew they were different.

2. How does the generation factor influence the experience of a Latino student? This study focused on subgroups of Latinos, but did not focus on generation gaps. The differentiation between first-, second- and third-generation students within each subgroup needs to be addressed.
3. What is the main difference for successful Latino students and unsuccessful Latino students? The participants in this study had either successfully completed college or were close to graduating. Latinos who are not successful in obtaining at least a bachelor's degree should be examined. This may include: Latinos who never attend college; Latinos who only attend community college but never transfer to a four-year institution; and Latinos who attend a four-year institution, but withdraw. All of the participants would be asked the same questions as in this study and a comparison of those results needs to be examined.
4. What type of programs can university administrators implement in order to accommodate the needs of the heterogeneous Latino group? Should the colleges place more emphasis on internal programming, such as outreach, mentoring, and encouraging participation in clubs, or should there be more emphasis placed on external factors, such as parent involvement, finances, and academic preparation? The findings in this study indicate a greater need for programming in the areas outside of the college setting. However, more research centered on the Latino issues needs to be addressed.

5. What are the needs of Central and South American Latinos? Should they be treated as international students, Latino students, or both? There needs to be more research involving Central and South American Latinos. Even though they account for a small portion of the United States Latino population in higher education, they still need to be heard and understood.

Conclusion

The findings in the study demonstrate that education administrators need to pay attention to external factors such as parents and cultural integration if there is a desire to retain and graduate Latino students. Finances have an integral function in the retention of Latinos, but not in the way most would believe. It does not deter the Latino from attending school. However, the Latino student usually needs to work in order to pay for schooling. The time spent away from studies and other extra-curricular activities in order to work makes the Latino experience very different from other non-Latino groups.

Latino students are a heterogeneous, minority group that will change the way the United States educational system runs. With the increase in every sub-group of Latino in America, administrators in both secondary and higher education will need to change the way they do business in order to accommodate the changing culture in their schools and campuses. The voice of the individual Latino is a powerful one. Every Latino has a story to tell. Everyone needs to listen to what the Latino has to say.

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APPENDICES

7

APPENDIX A
LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Student:

I am looking for students who have completed at least 75 credit hours at the university level and identify themselves as a Latino who would be willing to participate in a study on Latino students. A student who is classified as a junior, senior, graduate student or a student who has graduated within the past two years is eligible to participate in this study. I am presently a doctoral student at Northern Illinois University.

I am conducting a study on Latino college students. More specifically, I am doing research to study Latino sub-cultures (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South America - i.e. Panama, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Brazilian, and Venezuela) and how their cultural integration can affect their retention and success of achieving a baccalaureate degree.

I am seeking both male and females to participate. I would like to interview four or five individuals from each ethnicity within the Latino population. Each participant will complete a short questionnaire, followed by a one-on-one, hour long interview. The interview will be conducted in English. Your participation is completely voluntary.

The interview will consist of a variety of questions concerning your thoughts on your own beliefs and values. We will discuss how your culture has influenced your experiences at the university.

I will use the information for my research on Latino cultures. I will also be providing the university with a summary of my results. Your name will not be used in any form. I will be making an audio recording of the interview. Once I have completed my study, I will destroy all the information I receive. I have included a sample consent form that you will need to complete

Please contact me at (630) 907-5917 or email me at hernandi@imsa.edu to let me know you are interested in participating. I will then follow up with a phone call (or email) to set up an interview.

Thank you in advance for assisting me in this project.

Sincerely,
Robert Hernandez
Doctoral Student-NIU
hernandi@imsa.edu

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH STUDY CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the study titled, "Latino College Students: Cultural Integration, Retention, and Successful Completion." This study is being conducted by Robert Hernandez, a doctoral student at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of this study is to examine and understand Latino College students' sub-cultures and how their cultural integration can affect their retention and completion of a baccalaureate degree. Also, this study examines the cultural factors that influence student retention.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to complete a questionnaire that should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. I then will be asked to be interviewed by the researcher. The interview will be conducted in English and take about 45 minutes. The researcher will ask me questions concerning personal experiences about my culture, as well as my thoughts and feelings concerning my success at the University.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice. If I have any further questions concerning this study, I may contact Robert Hernandez at (630) 907-5917 (hernandi@imsa.edu) or Dr. Rosita Marcano (marcano@niu.edu) – faculty advisor. I understand that if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.

I have been informed of the potential risks and discomforts I could experience during this study including remembering unpleasant memories from my past and relating current experiences that may make me frustrated or angry. I understand that all the information collected will be kept confidential. No mention of my name will appear in any published report or document.

I understand that my consent to participate in this study does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation, and I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Name (PRINT)

Participant's Name (SIGNATURE)

Date

I agree that I will be audio taped for the interview. I understand that my name will not be used in any form throughout the study. Once the study is completed, I understand the tapes will be destroyed.

Participant's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C
QUESTIONNAIRE

COLLEGE LATINO STUDENT SURVEY

Please complete the following questionnaire. If you feel uncomfortable with responding to any question, skip the question and move on.

I. INFORMATION CONCERNING PARTICIPANT

1. *Gender* (Please circle one): Male Female
2. *Classification*: Junior Senior Graduate Student Graduated
3. *What is your Ethnicity?* (How would you describe yourself)

If Mexican: Mexican Mexican-American Chicano

Mexican Immigrant

If Puerto Rican: Puerto Rican Puerto Rican permanently in America

If Cuban: Cuban Cuban-American Immigrated
before 1970/after 1970

If Central/South American: Dominican Republic El Salvador

Guatemala Nicaragua other _____
4. *How many generations have your family (you included) lived in the United States?* (circle one)

1st 2nd 3rd 4th more than 4
5. *What is your birthplace?*

US Mexico Puerto Rico Cuba other _____

 - a. *What setting were you born?* (circle one) Urban Rural
 - b. *If inside the US, where?* _____
 - c. *If outside the US, how long have you been living in the United States?* (Circle one)

Less than 2yrs 2-5 yrs 6-10yrs 11-15yrs more than 15 yrs

6. *What is your primary language?* (Circle one)

Spanish English other _____

a. *Are you bi-lingual?* YES NO

b. *Can you read Spanish?* YES NO

c. *Can you write Spanish?* YES NO

d. *If YES to any of the above questions under number (7), where did you learn?* (all that apply)

From parents/relatives self-taught classes in school

7. *What language is spoken at home?* (Circle one)

Spanish English Other _____

II. PARENT BACKGROUND

8. *What is your father's highest level of education completed?* (Circle one)

Grade school High school GED Some College College

Graduate Work

9. *What is your father's occupation?* (Circle one)

Professional Managerial Skilled Unskilled

Migrant worker Unemployed Other _____

10. *Where is your father's birthplace?* (Circle one)

U.S. Mexico Puerto Rico Cuba other _____

a. *What setting was he born?* (circle one) Urban Rural

b. *If born outside the US, how long has he been living in the United States?*

Less than 2yrs 2-5 yrs 6-10yrs 11-15yrs more than 15 yrs

11. *What is your father's primary language?* ~
 Spanish English Other _____
- a. *Is he bi-lingual?* Yes No
12. *What is your mother's highest level of education completed?* (Circle one)
 Grade school High school GED Some College College
 Graduate Work
13. *What is your mother's occupation?*
 Professional Managerial Skilled Unskilled
 Migrant worker Unemployed Other _____
14. *What is your mother's birthplace?*
 US Mexico Puerto Rico Cuba other _____
- a. *What setting was she born?* (circle one) Urban Rural
- b. *If born outside the US, how long has she been living in the US?*
 Less than 2yrs 2-5 yrs 6-10yrs 11-15yrs more than 15 yrs
15. *What is your mother's primary language?*
 Spanish English Other _____
- a. *Is she bi-lingual?* Yes No
16. *What is your family income?*
 \$0-\$10,000 \$10,001-\$20,000 \$20,001-\$40,000
 \$40,001-\$60,000 over \$60,001
17. *How many siblings do you have?* (Indicate a number) _____
18. *How many siblings are currently in the main household?* (indicate a number) _____

19. *Are there other (relatives or friends) living in the main household?*
YES NO

** If Yes (indicate how many)*

Aunt/Uncle _____ Grandparents _____ Cousins _____ Friends _____

Other _____

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS

Latino College Students: Cultural Integration, Retention, and Successful Completion

SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW

1. *Describe your culture growing up.*

PROMPTS

- Describe your values and beliefs
 - Importance of family
 - religion
- What are some of your customs
 - Holiday celebrations
 - Family get-togethers

2. *Describe your family.*

PROMPTS

- How much time do you do you spend with your family?
 - church
 - shopping
 - visiting
 - vacation
 - work
 - eating
- How is your family involved with your education?
- Who are you closest to in your family?
 - Relationship to Father
 - Relationship to Mother
 - Other siblings
 - Grandparents
 - Aunts/Uncles

3. *Described the type of neighborhood you lived in.*

PROMPTS

- Were there other Latinos?
 - Describe the types
- How did you spend your time?
 - friends
 - family

- Did you watch/listen to Spanish TV? Radio? Movies
- Did you read Spanish magazines?
- Did you eat a variety of food?

4. *What was your exposure to other Latinos?*

PROMPTS

- Were there others who had similar backgrounds?
- At school
- Around the neighborhood

5. *What factors influenced you to attend College?*

PROMPTS

- Family
- School
 - counselor
 - faculty
 - staff
- Friends
- Money (economics)
- Role models

6. *What does "Success in College" mean to you?*

PROMPTS

- graduation
- making money
- pride of the family (1st to go to college)
- be a role model for others

7. *What has your experience been like at college?*

PROMPTS

- What kind of grades do you get?
 - Average?
 - As & Bs
 - Passing
- Do you work?
 - Need to support education
 - Support family
 - For spending money
- How are you paying for college?
 - Family funds
 - Loans
 - Scholarships
 - Self-supporting
- What clubs/organizations do you belong to?

8. *Describe the college culture*

PROMPTS

- What are the values and beliefs of the typical college student at NIU?
- What customs are present?
- How do they differ from your own experience?

9. *How are you connected to the Latinos on campus?*

PROMPTS

- What do you do with friends?
 - Music
 - Sports
 - Drinking, hanging out
 - Books, magazines
- Attend events sponsored by Latino clubs/organizations
- Connection with the University for Latino Resources
- Do you still listen/read in Spanish
 - Music
 - Movies
 - books

10. *What kind of barriers do you face while attending college?*

PROMPTS

- Economics
- Lack of support
- No role models
- Not fitting in
- Racism

11. *What factors may influence you to leave college?*

PROMPTS

- No diversity
- No role models
- Money
- Family

12. *What factors may influence other Latinos to stay/leave college?*

PROMPTS

- No diversity
- No role models
- Money
- Family

13. *Is there anything you want to share that hasn't been asked?*

APPENDIX E
RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Table 1

Participant Gender? (n=20)

Latino		Latina	
Cuban	1	Cuban	4
Mexican	3	Mexican	2
Puerto Rican	2	Puerto Rican	3
* South American		* South American	
* Brazilian	1	* Brazilian	1
* Colombian	2	* Colombian	1
TOTAL	9		11

* NOTE: Throughout the survey, two groups were used for research. These groups were from South America. No Central American participated in the survey.

Table 2

Class Reference of Participant? (n=20)

	Junior	Senior	Graduate Student	Graduated
Cuban	0	1	2	2
Mexican	1	1	2	1
Puerto Rican	0	2	0	3
* Brazilian	0	1	1	0
* Colombian	0	0	2	1
TOTAL	1	5	7	7

Table 3

Generations Lived in US including self? (n=20)

	1 st	2nd	3rd	4th
Cuban	2	3	0	0
Mexican	2	2	0	1
Puerto Rican	1	3	1	0
* Brazilian	2	0	0	0
* Colombian	3	0	0	0
TOTAL	10	8	1	1

Table 4

Birthplace of participant? (n=20)

	United States	Cuba	Mexico	Puerto Rico	Brazil	Colombia
Cuban	3	2	0	0	0	0
Mexican	3	0	2	0	0	0
Puerto Rican	4	0	0	1	0	0
* Brazilian	0	0	0	0	2	0
* Colombian	0	0	0	0	0	3
TOTAL	10	2	2	1	3	2

Table 5

Setting of community growing up? (n=20)

	Urban	Rural
Cuban	5	0
Mexican	4	1
Puerto Rican	5	0
* Brazilian	2	0
* Colombian	3	0
TOTAL	19	1

Table 6

If born in the United States, general location? (n=10)

	Midwest	Southeast	Northeast	Other
Cuban	0	3	0	0
Mexican	3	0	0	0
Puerto Rican	3	0	1	0
* Brazilian	0	0	0	0
* Colombian	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	6	3	1	0

Note:

Midwest - All of the participants stated growing up in Illinois

Southeast – All of the participants stated growing up in Florida, specifically Miami

Northeast – Participant stated growing up in New York

Table 7

If not born in the US, how long lived in US? (n=10)

	Less than 5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	More than 15 yrs
Cuban	0	0	1	1
Mexican	0	1	1	0
Puerto Rican	0	0	1	0
*Brazilian	0	0	2	0
*Colombian	0	0	3	0
TOTAL	0	1	8	1

Table 8

Primary language? (n=20)

	Spanish	English	Other (Portuguese)
Cuban	5	0	0
Mexican	3	2	0
Puerto Rican	4	1	0
*Brazilian	0	0	2
*Colombian	3	0	0
TOTAL	15	3	2

Table 9

Bilingual? (n=20)

	Yes	No
Cuban	5	0
Mexican	4	1
Puerto Rican	4	1
*Brazilian	2	0
*Colombian	3	0
TOTAL	18	2

Table 10

Read Spanish? (n=20)

	Yes	No	(Portuguese)
Cuban	5	0	0
Mexican	5	0	0
Puerto Rican	4	1	0
*Brazilian	0	0	2
*Colombian	3	0	0
TOTAL	17	1	2

Table 11

Write Spanish? (n=20)

	Yes	No	(Portuguese)
Cuban	5	0	0
Mexican	4	1	0
Puerto Rican	5	0	0
*Brazilian	0	0	2
*Colombian	3	0	0
TOTAL	17	1	2

Table 12

Where did you learn Spanish? (multiple responses)

	Birth	Self-taught	School
Cuban	5	5	1
Mexican	4	2	5
Puerto Rican	4	4	3
*Brazilian	2	2	2
*Colombian	3	3	3
TOTAL	18	16	14

Table 13

What language is spoken in the home? (n=20)

	Spanish	English	Both	Portuguese
Cuban	5	0	0	0
Mexican	2	1	2	0
Puerto Rican	2	1	2	0
*Brazilian	0	0	2	2
*Colombian	0	0	3	0
TOTAL	9	2	9	2

Note: Both Brazilians responded that both English and Portuguese are spoken. Both were also familiar with Spanish.

Table 14

Father's level of education? (n=20)

	Grade	H.S.	GED	Some College	College	Graduate
Cuban	2	2	0	1	0	0
Mexican	0	2	0	3	0	0
Puerto Rican	1	3	0		0	1
*Brazilian	0	0	0	1	0	1
*Colombian	1	0	0	1	0	1
TOTAL	4	7	0	6	0	3

Table 15

Father's occupation? (n=20)

	Professional	Managerial	Skilled	Unskilled	Other
Cuban	0	1	1	1	2
Mexican	1	0	3	1	0
Puerto Rican	1	1	2	1	0
*Brazilian	0	0	1	1	0
*Colombian	1	1	1	0	0
TOTAL	3	3	8	4	2

NOTE: None marked "Migrant worker" or "Unemployed"

Table 16

Father's birthplace? (n=20)

	United States	Cuba	Mexico	Puerto Rico	Brazil	Colombia
Cuban	0	5	0	0	0	0
Mexican	1	0	4	0	0	0
Puerto Rican	1	0	0	4	0	0
*Brazilian	0	0	0	0	2	0
*Colombian	0	0	0	0	0	3
TOTAL	2	5	4	4	2	3

Table 17

Father's setting while growing up? (N=20)

	Urban	Rural
Cuban	5	0
Mexican	1	4
Puerto Rican	5	0
*Brazilian	1	1
*Colombian	3	0
TOTAL	15	5

Table 18

If Father not born in the US, how long living in the US? (n=18)

	Less than 5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	More than 15 yrs
Cuban	0	0	3	2
Mexican	0	0	3	1
Puerto Rican	0	0	3	1
*Brazilian	0	0	1	0
*Colombian	0	0	3	0
TOTAL	0	0	13	4

Note: One participant has father still living in Brazil

Table 19

Father's primary language? (n=20)

	Spanish	English	Other (Portuguese)
Cuban	5	0	0
Mexican	4	1	0
Puerto Rican	5	0	0
*Brazilian	0	0	2
*Colombian	3	0	0
TOTAL	17	1	2

Table 20

Father is bilingual? (n=20)

	Yes	No
Cuban	2	3
Mexican	3	2
Puerto Rican	5	0
*Brazilian	1	1
*Colombian	3	0
TOTAL	14	6

Table 21

Mother's level of education? (n=20)

	Grade	H.S.	GED	Some College	College	Graduate
Cuban	3	2	0	0	0	0
Mexican	0	3	0	2	0	0
Puerto Rican	0	3	0	1	1	0
*Brazilian	0	0	0	0	1	1
*Colombian	0	0	0	0	1	2
TOTAL	3	8	0	3	3	3

Table 22

Mother's occupation? (n=20)

	Professional	Managerial	Skilled	Unskilled	Other
Cuban	0	0	0	5	0
Mexican	0	0	1	2	2
Puerto Rican	0	1	2	1	1
*Brazilian	1	1	0	0	0
*Colombian	1	1	1	0	0
TOTAL	2	3	4	8	3

NOTE: None marked "migrant worker" or "Unemployed"

Table 23

Mother's birthplace? (n=20)

	United States	Cuba	Mexico	Puerto Rico	Brazil	Colombia
Cuban	0	5	0	0		
Mexican	0	0	5	0		
Puerto Rican	1	0	0	4		
*Brazilian	0	0	0	0	2	0
*Colombian	0	0	0	0	0	3
TOTAL	1	5	5	4	2	3

Table 24

Mother's setting while growing up? (n=20)

	Urban	Rural
Cuban	3	2
Mexican	1	4
Puerto Rican	5	0
*Brazilian	1	1
*Colombian	3	0
TOTAL	13	7

Table 25

If Mother not born in the US, how long living in the US? (n=18)

	Less than 5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	More than 15 yrs
Cuban	0	0	3	2
Mexican	0	0	3	2
Puerto Rican	0	0	2	2
*Brazilian	0	0	2	
*Colombian	0	0	3	0
TOTAL	0	0	13	6

Table 26

Mother's primary language? (n=20)

	Spanish	English	Other (Portuguese)
Cuban	5	0	0
Mexican	4	1	0
Puerto Rican	4	1	0
*Brazilian	0	0	2
*Colombian	3	0	0
TOTAL	16	2	2

Table 27

Mother is bilingual? (n=20)

	Yes	No
Cuban	1	4
Mexican	4	1
Puerto Rican	4	1
*Brazilian	2	0
*Colombian	3	0
TOTAL	14	6

Table 28

Family income? (n=20)

	<\$10,000	\$10,000< \$20,000	\$20,000< \$40,000	\$40,000< \$60,000	<\$60,000
Cuban	0	0	4	1	0
Mexican	0	0	4	1	0
Puerto Rican	1	2	1	1	0
*Brazilian	0	0	0	0	2
*Colombian	0	0	0	0	3
TOTAL	1	2	9	3	5

Table 29

How many siblings? (n=20)

	0	1	2	3	4
Cuban	0	3	1	0	1
Mexican	0	1	2	1	1
Puerto Rican	1	2	1	1	0
*Brazilian	0	1	1	0	0
*Colombian	0	2	0	0	1
TOTAL	1	9	5	2	3

Table 30

Do other relatives live at home? (n=20)

	Yes	No
Cuban	0	5
Mexican	0	5
Puerto Rican	0	5
*Brazilian	0	2
*Colombian	0	3
TOTAL	0	20

NOTE: During the interview, one Mexican did state that the grandmother lived in the household. However, the grandmother would go back and forth from Mexico, so the participant responded "no" on the survey.