Demonstration of Meeting the 2014 Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs Core and the Student Affairs/College Counseling Specialty Standards via a Major Artifact

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Counseling, College Counseling and Student Services

By

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May 2015
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I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude to the department and faculty members who contributed to my overall development and growth. I want to thank my professors, mentors and the director of the College Counseling and Student Services program, Merril Simon for challenging, supporting, guiding and encouraging my growth as an individual and professional. Most importantly, I would like to thank my significant other Richard and my family for their support and unconditional love throughout this journey.
Abstract

Demonstration of Meeting the 2014 Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs Core and the Student Affairs/College Counseling Specialty Standards via a Major Artifacts

By
Jacqueline N. Espinoza
Master of Science in Counseling, College Counseling and Student Services

The Major Artifact was written to demonstrate that I have met the CACREP standard for this graduate program that encompasses the area of social and cultural diversity. As my graduate program is in counseling with an option in college counseling and student affairs, the topic that I have written about pertains to post-secondary institutions and how college counselors and student affair professionals can assist students in this area.

The major artifact written on social and cultural diversity discussed culture, challenges and family responsibilities of Latin American women. This artifact discusses how these challenges affect retention in college and the reasons why post-secondary institutions need to become aware of the economic, cultural and familial differences of the Latin community. Laura Rendón’s (1994) Validation theory was used to explain how validation on college campuses is a tool to assist with retention and persistence.
This artifact was developed as a part of a major work that also included reflections demonstrating competence with the Core and Student Affairs/College Counseling Specialty Standards of the 2014 CACREP Accreditation standards.
Fostering Latina College Education: Identifying Culture, Challenges and Family Obligations

Latin cultures are comprised of individuals living in the United States who have ancestries from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Central and South American countries. In 2005, 65.9% of 18-24 year old Hispanics were high school graduates compared to the 82.9% of 18-24 year olds of all other races (de los Santos & Cuamea, 2010). In 2006 the Hispanic population of 44,298,975 represented 14.8% of the total population in the United States. In 2008, according to the U.S. Census Bureau Latinos encompassed 15.4% of the United States population and of that number only 12.9% enrolled in college. The projected number of Hispanic high school graduates will double by the year 2021/2022 and total to 780,268. With the growing population of students it is important for student affairs professionals and counselors to understand the culture of Latina women. Latin women are the least likely to enroll in four year colleges after high school graduation and to earn college degrees (Sy & Romero, 2008). This is due to Latinas suffering from some degree of “academic and social oppression in college [because] they come to college underprepared and have no clear goals” (Diaz de Sabates, 2007, p. 20).

First-generation Latinas often come from immigrant homes with parents who have a low level of educational attainment and have never attended college. Due to this, their families have a hard time understanding and supporting these students' transition to college. Most Latin women are left with having multiple expectations and obligations in their family, work, and school settings while pursuing their degrees. In order to identify proper strategies to assist Latin women in college, demographics, cultural challenges, and
family obligations need to be identified and validated in order for an increase in retention and graduation rates of Latina women.

**Demographics**

According to Navarro, Ojeda, Schwarts and Pina-Watson (2014), only 13% of Latinas who attend college are likely to graduate compared to 39% of their white counterparts. Latina women are often faced with challenges of providing financial assistance, helping their families, and taking on the role of surrogate parents to their sibling while still balancing their school work. This can lead to psychological distress. Although family connections “could be a protective factor, the conflicting demands of multiple roles can increase stress and compromise academic outcomes” (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 216). Diaz de Sabates (2007) stated that Latinas suffer from some degree of academic and social oppression and have no clear goals. The U.S. Census stated that from 1990 to 2000, the U.S population grew 13.2 % while the Hispanic population grew 57.9 % (as cited in Diaz de Sabates, 2007). Dias de Sabates' research structured as a two-hour long open forum for Latina students to openly express themselves. The focus of the forum was to understand the realities of Latinas' experiences at Kansas State University in areas such as education, dreams for the future, and advice to other Latinas on campus.

Six themes emerged during the interview. The themes were (a) families, (b) parents’ education, (c) coming to college, (d) self-determination, (e) experiencing oppression, and (f) college experience. The respondents reflected upon their continuous strength they had to embrace to weave the multiple cultural realities they face while attending college. Most of the Latinas who participated in the forum had parents who did not attend school past the sixth grade in their home countries, and this caused conflict
within families because they were unaware of the expectations of college. Each Latina that was part of the group said that “support was instrumental for Latina’s academic perseverance” (Diaz de Sabates, 2007, p .25). Students who were provided with support and encouragement were able to push through, but those that were not provided with support and encouragement were less likely to persist in college.

The projected growth of the Latino college population in the 2021-2022 academic year is estimated to be 780,268 compared to the 2004-2005 academic year total of 380,736. To learn more about the challenges that could come with the growth in the Latino population in college, De los Santos and Cuamea (2010) sent surveys to presidents and chancellors of Hispanic-serving institutions. The surveys exposed five potential institutional problems. The five challenges were (a) funding, (b) students' preparedness, (c) student retention/success, (d) faculty, and (e) affordability. Results indicated that 78.8% of presidents indicated financial issues were placing restrictions on the institution. Nearly 40% of respondents stated that a large number of students currently entering colleges and universities were underprepared to do college level work. Thirty-two percent of respondents felt that retention needed to be improved. They related under-preparedness to student retention and success. To assist with the Latino population hiring diverse faculty and staff also plays a major role in providing effective services for Latino students. The final challenge was affordability. Fifteen percent of presidents and chancellors identified affordability as a concern. This was a concern in higher education due to the increasing costs of higher education and the growth of population projected over the coming years. To meet these challenges, colleges need to provide services so that Latinos needs are being met in higher education.
Culture and Related Challenges

Historically, Latinas have often been ignored in the higher education literature. This has caused a need to examine and understand Latina culture. The typical cultural expectation in the United States, and in many U.S. institutions of higher education, is that in the transition from adolescence to adulthood, individuals begin to separate from their families, becoming independent and self-reliant. In Latin culture, however, there are two main cultural values that are a reoccurring theme throughout literature. These two values are marianismo and familismo. Marianismo is a gendered expectation term that emphasizes the self-sacrificing role of women and that women should take on the role of caretaker (Sy & Brittian, 2008). The term also suggests that women are also supposed to be submissive and take on the role of wife, mother, and girlfriend. Familismo is a cultural value that highlights family closeness and loyalty. Familismo involves the individual family member putting the needs of their family first and make personal sacrifices.

Rodriquez, Guido-DiBrito, Torres and Talbot (2000), attempted to address the gap of research to assist in the understanding of Latinas’ culture and concerns. The authors focused on four areas including (a) difficulty of labeling ethnic populations and scarcity of research, (b) struggle with language of labeling their ethnic populations, (c) barriers, and (d) achievement and strategies for higher education. Latinas struggle with the language labeling of their ethnic populations because in order to report people of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South and Central American descent, the Unites States has adopted the term Hispanic, while many individuals self-identify using the label Latino. Latinas also encounter barriers such as socioeconomic status, under-representation, cultural stereotyping, stress, and institutional marginalization. The
dynamics that affect achievement for Latinas are the role that mothers play in the home, a less authoritative home style, and attending school in middle-class districts. Though achievement can be difficult, strategies and services such as financial aid and academic support can promote success.

Rodriguez et al. (2000) found the first step toward understanding Latin culture is understanding how labeling, barriers, success, and strategies for promoting achievement would help clarify the challenges Latinas face in college. Through this understanding, higher education institutions that provide academic, financial, and cultural support can more effectively promote retention and success for the Latin population.

As Rodriguez et al. (2000) stated, barriers play a factor in the attainment of education. In Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, and Rosales’ (2005) study, the researchers explored reasons beyond blaming culture for under-education. They assessed university comfort, social support, and self-beliefs as predictors for academic non-persistence. A sample of 108 undergraduate Latino and Latina students were asked to complete surveys. Of the 108 participants, 70 were female. Various scales were used to collect the data. To assess perceptions of the university the University Environment Scale (UES) was used. The Cultural Congruency Scale (CCS) examined students’ perceptions of fit or congruence between their personal values and those of the institution. To assess the likelihood that students would experience specific barriers and educational goals, Perception of Barriers (POB) was used. The subscales included sex discrimination, ethnic discrimination and career goals. Social support was assessed using the Perceived Social Support Inventory-Family and -Friends (PSS-FA and PSS-FR). The Parental Encouragement Scale (PES) was used to determine the amount of support received by
parents. The Mentoring Scale assessed if students thought they had been mentored during college. Finally, self-beliefs and self-efficacy were assessed using Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scales (RSES), the College Self-Efficacy Inventory (CSEI), and the Educational Degree Behaviors Self-Efficacy Scale (EDBSES).

Results showed after gathering results from the assessments that university comfort and social support were related. The more positive perceptions students had of the university environment, the lower the barriers, which assisted students retention based on the support they received from family and friends. Fewer perceived barriers were also related to lower rates of withdrawal. Although students were faced with cultural challenges and expectations they needed to fulfill, data collected by Gloria et al (2005) showed that students who were able to create strong connections to their university were more likely to persist in college.

Latinas experience additional factors that may affect their persistence in college. Family “influences the motivation of Latina students to pursue higher education” (Gloria and Castellanos, 2012, p. 92). As previously stated, support is essential in the persistence of Latinas in college. Melendez and Melendez (2010) identify the influences of parental attachment has on Latin women. The researchers explored attachments utilizing the Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ) to assist participants to identify their relationship with and feelings toward their parents and the Students Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SCAQ) to determine their adjustment to college. Results indicated that Latina parental support correlated with institutional attachment. Parents who offered high levels of support allowed student to integrate with, become attached to, and develop pride in their colleges.
Zell (2010) performed a qualitative study to examine how the psychological and affective experiences of Latino and Latina students influence their persistence toward higher education completion. Through individual interviews, questions regarding support systems and barriers to accessing resources were asked. Additionally, interviewers asked how barriers were overcome and which institutional structures or persons were helpful to students. The analysis revealed eight themes which included “overcoming personal and social challenges, maturation, self-discovery and college adjustment, self-efficacy, continuous strategizing, sense of purpose, perception of faculty, perception of advisors, and guided and groomed by family to succeed” (p.170).

The personal and social challenges students faced were conflicting messages that they should integrate into college, but at the same time were excluded by their families. The majority of students who did attend college indicated that college assisted them in maturation, through which they gained valuable experiences, skills, and assets. All participants in the study revealed that they felt confident in accomplishing their academics, which resulted in self-efficacy. Participants described that they felt financially burdened by college and that it put a strain on their families. Motivation was a key factor that assisted in the pursuit of higher education. Relationships with faculty made students feel cared for and comfortable asking for assistance while in college. Research has shown that Latin culture is hard to define due to the lack of a proper definition or identifying labels, but through the assistance of helpful faculty and support networks, individual students have been able to persist in college.
Family Responsibilities

Families present a unique challenge because of the “close knit relationship ties” Latino families are composed of (Berrios-Allison, 2011, p. 82). Due to the multiple roles Latin women play in their families, they often experience higher levels of stress compared to Latin men in college. Familismo and marianismo play essential roles in college student’s ability to cope with balancing school, work, and family.

Sy and Romero’s (2008) study provides insight into Latina family dynamics. The study explored familial responsibilities and how the responsibilities affected student’s college experiences. The underrepresentation of Latinas in higher education and parents with limited to no experience in college causes “[Latinas to be] more at risk of experiencing conflict between home and school responsibilities” (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 214). Twenty Latinas between the ages of 18 to 29 years old participated in the study. They were first or second generation Americans, who were attending or had attended college or who had completed a 4-year college degree.

The research (Sy & Romero, 2008) aimed to find what types of obligations were expected for Latinas to fulfill while attending college. The results found that women emphasized the need to be self-sufficient to assist their families with financial contributions. Participants emphasized that becoming self-sufficient is important “to support family, [volunteer] financial contributions and [serve as] a surrogate parents for younger family members” (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 218). Participants indicated that although they did not have to provide financial support, they chose to. The role of surrogate parent was also more notable among daughters of single parent homes. Familismo factors into how students place family above their own needs. Families with
strong familial beliefs were associated with lower educational aspirations due to extensive sibling care responsibilities (East & Hamill, 2013). This causes conflicts between finding independence while balancing the needs and demands of their families.

Parents in Latina homes continue to view their daughters as family-oriented caretakers which places additional pressure on these women to continue to fulfill their familial obligations. Sy and Brittian (2008) identify family obligations as “continuing to contribute to the daily workings of the family, including finances, household chores, taking care of siblings and elders, translating for parents and spending time with family” (p. 730). Family obligations determine an individual’s obligation to help and support their family, which conflicts with the U.S. culture of independence.

Sy and Brittian’s (2008) study included 296 Latina, European American and Asian American women were examined to determine the extent of decisions many young women make when transitioning to college, such as where to live and how much to work. Family obligations were measured using a scale measuring such factors as frequency of fulfilling family obligation on a Likert-type scale with 0 meaning never and 4 meaning daily. Works hours and residential plans were determined by asking how many hours between 0 and 30 or more hours of work they would complete. Two categories of residency, plan to live at home or plan to live away from home, were included. Results indicated that Latina students would fulfill family obligations more often than European American students. These students also reported that they would be more likely to be living at home during their first semester of college because of finances and family responsibilities. Despite Latina students in the study not being first or second generation,
family was held with great importance. This shows that family obligations are a function of family, not only for recently immigrated families, but in the Latin culture overall.

In Sanchez, Esparza, Colon, and Davis’ (2010) study, the researchers examined the role of family and economics on individual’s decisions when transitioning to college. Thirty-two participants, mostly female, were interviewed during the qualitative study. The first section began with an introductory section, the second section asked about various individuals who played a part in the individuals' lives including family, peers, mentors, and school personnel. The third section asked about their aspiration and expectations for their futures regarding school, work, and life outside of school or work. Through the interviews, family obligations were identified as a recurring theme. One individual stated that she was not in school because she had to help her mom raise the house. When she told this to another individual, they told her that it was not her responsibility and that her responsibility was school. The student was upset because the individual was blunt and did not understand her responsibility to her family. Paying for one’s education while also contributing to family households was also a recurring theme. Sanchez et al. (2010) found that 57% of participants “worked and attended college simultaneously in order to financially assist their family” (p. 878). Students explained that they tried in multiple ways to alleviate their parents' burdens. Students were also balancing time with family, school, and work, splitting up their daily tasks between family members, chores, and school work.

Sy's (2006) research showed that the effect of family obligations and part-time work was stress in academic achievement in higher education. One hundred seventeen Latina college students from immigrant families completed surveys that were developed
to examine mother-daughter relationships, family obligations, work related stress, and academic achievement. Spending time with family and language brokering were two family obligations that were focused on in the study. Stress and work demands were also measured to determine the effects they could have on Latinas. Results specified that language brokering, or translating school-related material and interactions for family members, was common. Seventy-four percent of participants reported that in the past year they had performed language brokering for their parents. This led to higher levels of school related stress. However, overall, time spent with family had a significant positive effect in this study. Students who spent more time with family received higher grade point averages and had lower levels of school related stress. Students also reported working an average of 20 hours each week, which caused language brokering to occur less frequently leading to lower school related stress. Work hours in the study had no significant effect on grade point averages, but did cause higher stress levels that interfered with academic achievement. Additionally, while spending time with family did assist with increasing grade point averages and reducing stress level, work still produced higher levels of school related stress when trying to obtain a college education.

Balance

The demands of a collectivist or inclusive culture and familismo are deep rooted in members of Latino cultures from a young age. As individuals develop, the closeness of family is instilled to assist with stress; however, this can also hinder individuals from trying to establish independence in college. To assist with the balance, student affairs and college counseling professionals have to understand that familismo is a double-edged sword. Family connectedness serves as a motivator and supports emotional well-being,
but interferes with academic achievement as well. Fifteen Latina doctoral graduate students were interviewed. Thirteen participants were first generation. Participants were asked questions about their experiences growing up and their relationships with family as graduate students. Two groups emerged: the integrators and the separators. Integrators managed family expectations and obligations by communicating with family members about “their school responsibilities… integrators blended family and school by first explaining the nature of school demands” and used family support to assist with academics (Espinoza, 2010, p. 323). Separators organized their daily activities to keep family separate from school. They do this to reduce conflict and keep their schooling experiences separate to “protect their relationship with family members” (Espinoza, 2010, p. 323). Gilroy (2011) states that Latinas are often not prepared for the differences between undergraduate and graduate school work. Since this occurs, it is essential for student affairs professionals and counselors to validate Latina students concerns with various hurdles while simultaneously understanding their values.

Rendón’s Validation Theory

The core values of the Latin community for women consist of marianismo and familismo. Once these values and family obligation have been identified and understood, Rendón’s Validation theory can assist with attributing validation with retention in higher education. Validating college experiences and providing encouragement, affirmation, and support have played a significant role in the impact of student development. United States institutions of higher education focus primarily on students developing independence while in college. These institutions also favor competition over
collaboration, which can cause non-traditional students from collectivistic cultures to feel isolated and overwhelmed by college.

Rendón’s (1994) research explored how the culture in higher education needs to change to “better meet the needs of today’s rich, diverse student population” (p. 34). Rendón sought to answer two questions about how students become active and involved in the academic community and how students’ out-of-class experiences and classroom learning and achievement broaden general education goals. One hundred thirty two first year students were interviewed. An open-ended interview was conducted to acquire student responses on in-class and out-of-class validation. The role of faculty to foster in-class academic validation included personable and approachable attitude toward students, faculty treating student equally, faculty working with students needing extra help, and faculty demonstrating genuine concern for students. Students who are provided with social support, such as mentoring, were more likely to graduate when compared to those who did not receive mentoring and often dropped out (Bordes-Edgar, Arredondo, Robinson Kurplus & Rund, 2011). Out-of-class validation was provided by friends, family, and social activities. Out-of-class validation often took precedence when in-class validation was absent.

Rendón’s (1994) theory of validation has six components that allow for a comprehensive understanding of students in college. The first element, validation, is “an enabling, confirming and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that foster academic and interpersonal development” (Rendón, 1994, p. 44) and is most important. Validation is essential due to placing the responsibility for initiating contact with students on the institution. Many students from lower-income families are often
hesitant to ask questions in higher education settings. When validation is present, “students are capable of learning and developing self-worth” (Rendón, 2002, p. 644). By Student affairs professionals and counselors initiating contact with students, it can reduce the hesitation to ask questions and students can become more comfortable with their campus communities. This assists students in becoming active agents in their education.

**Interventions**

For Latinas, college can be a difficult transition. Most students do not have parents who can provide them with information about college or advice for the new experiences they will be encountering. Cerna, Perez, and Saenz’s (2009) research states that economics play a role in educational attainment due to college cost and work responsibilities negatively affecting the chances of attaining a degree. Berrios-Allison’s (2011) study identifies a successful intervention that has worked to assist in retention rates. The Latino community is one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States, yet many individuals still acquire midlevel occupations. A successful college transition “is an early step toward joining the professional workforce and attaining a sense of financial, social, cultural, spiritual and personal well-being” (Berrios-Allison, 2011, p. 81). Utilizing written materials, exercises, individual interpretations, exposure to practical occupational information, positive role models and attention building support systems for choices and plans an intervention was created to assist Latino students with career decisions.

Results indicated that when Latinos participated in culturally derived support groups, these students were more likely to take on leadership roles, join organizations campus wide, and connect with others from the same community. The data showed that
through five years of group exercises 18.6% had graduated and were able to secure a career. During the second, third, and fourth years of college attendance, the university and Latino population rate continually dropped, but the retention rate of students in the support group remained higher than the overall student population.

Discussion

By the 2021-2022 academic year, the Latino community will double in size. This means that providing proper education and resources is essential to assist students who are making the transition to college who often belong to lower socioeconomic standing. Familismo and marianismo are two essential values that reappear within the literature and evidently cause conflicts for Latina women. As discussed, this “double edged sword” causes Latinas to maintain a balancing act between family and school. In United States, college students are intended to become self-reliant, but the Latin culture does not fit within that model. As Sy and Brittian (2008) found, for Latina women, regardless of the generation they came from, family was still held as a top priority. This is why balance is essential for Latinas, whether they are an includer or a separator, incorporating family is a cultural value and expectation in many homes.

As student affairs professionals and counselors identifying Latina demographics, cultural challenges and family obligations can assist in creating a more culturally aware campus that can assist these students to become self-reliant in a culturally appropriate way. As Rendón (1994) stated, it is the university's responsibility to reach the students. College professionals have to understand how institutional practices affect students and their relationships with their families. Universities should consider making policies that work for diverse populations, such as outreach programs to assist Latina students and
their parents in understanding the transition to college. When these factors are validated and understood by professionals the academic system, higher education institutions in the United States can be better prepared for the growing Latin community.

**Conclusion**

The paper has presented how culture, personal challenges, and family responsibilities of Latin American women affect retention in college. Previous studies and research presented have demonstrated that with the growing population, colleges need to become aware of the economic, cultural, and familial differences that occur in non-Anglo, non-traditional student populations. Creating balance was also discussed as a means of understanding how Latina women are creating balance while pursuing higher education. Laura Rendón’s Validation theory was utilized to explain how out-of class and in-class validation is necessary to help students retain and persist in college.

To promote Latina success and retention in higher education, efforts should be made to understand cultural values, assets, and attributes as a way to improve campus services. Additional interventions need to be created to assist Latinas with the challenges they face on entering the university. Providing a positive impact can help Latinas through various hurdles in academia. Finances are also a factor that leads to Latina non-persistence. To assist with this issue, the state and national governments needs to provide adequate aid packages to assist students to persist and graduate. Academic and student affairs administrators should also recognize the social and economic barriers that interfere with academic achievement. Universities should also promote diversity so Latina students can gain a sense of community and their culture is validated on campus. Once these factors are implemented on college campuses it can assist with retention and
promote Latin American women’s well-being in higher education. Limited research was found on the specific challenges Latinas encounter and how it affects retention. Further research needs to be explored to understand how to provide proper resources for this community.
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