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WHY ARE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS FAILING LATINX STUDENTS IN
HELPING THEM OBTAIN A COLLEGE DEGREE?

Exploring Factors that Make a Successful High Schools
to College Transition for Latinx Students.

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Adriana Amarillas is an Eastern Washington University Student. This paper was submitted to the 21th Annual EWU Research and creative work Symposium on March 2018 in Cheney, WA and submitted as an assignment for Introduction to Chicanx/Latinx Culture (CHST 101/ANTH 161) during Winter quarter.

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Abstract:

Latina/o's represent the largest college going minority in America, yet only 15 out of 100 students will graduate a 4-year institution (Castellanos & Gloria 2007). Latina/o's have been identified as the minority in the United States but now represent the majority of the minority. With the demand for higher education and degrees, this study explores whether or not higher education institutions in the U.S are fully prepared for the increase of diversity. Being the second largest ethnic group, this work attempts to identify addressing possible barriers that make it harder for students, specifically Latino students achieve higher education. Barriers such as skills needed, financial limitations, family or cultural boundaries, gender expectations and possible micro-aggression found with the lack of diverse teachers. This study assesses how could lowering the barriers for future Latina/o students help their path to higher education?

Key words: Latino students, barriers, higher education, minority, Latina/o faculty

Studies show that family life has a huge impact in a Latina/o's success in education. Many Latina/o's have more responsibilities in comparison to their white classmates, creating a barrier that others don't have. This also depends on household and the gender of the student.

Typically, it was thought that Latinas have a better chance at higher education compared to Latinos. The responsibilities that each have vary, Latinas most likely help with siblings and more home bound. As compared to the men, they tend to get jobs in the work force to help the family financially. Especially when students come from first generation families they are at a higher risk of deviations.

Figure 1
Psychosociocultural Framework for Latina/os in Higher Education

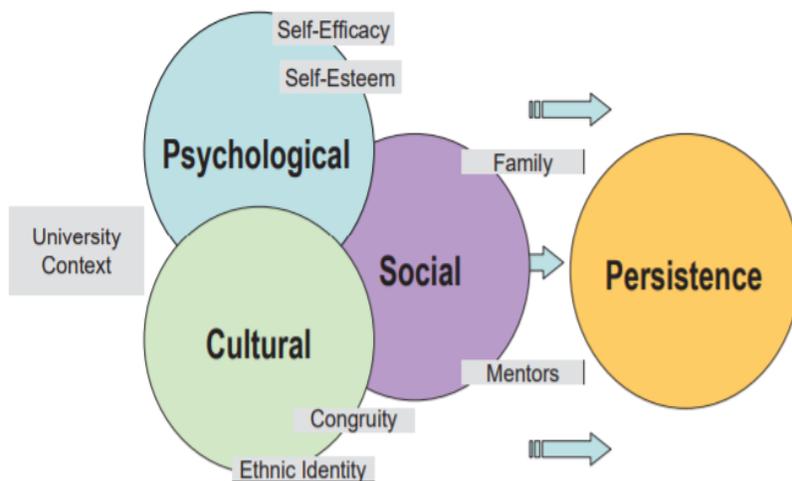


Figure one, (Gloria 2007) demonstrates what factors play in a psych-sociocultural context to a successful access to higher education.

Latina/o who are first generation college students face issues like, their families are less likely to know about financial aid, how important ACT/SAT scores, and less likely to afford preparation classes to improve scores. It has been proven that the push from family could increase your chances to successfully pass the bridge from high school to college.

History of barriers in Education

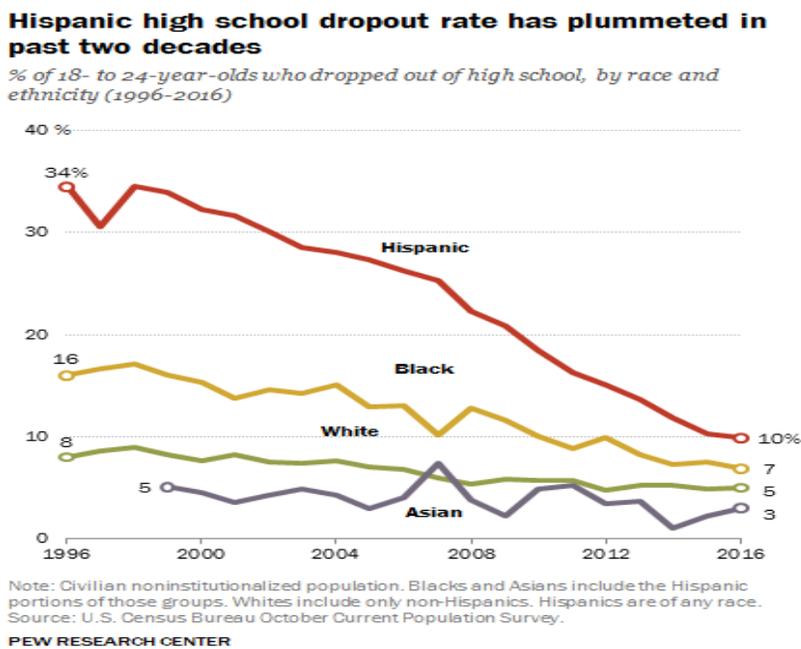
Historically the divide between Latina/o's in the U.S has always been present, even when Latina/o's are invisible. Starting with the turn to a better education for students, historically like the East Los Angeles walkouts. Sal- Castro not only took action on what he saw going on in the schools, but he also included a sense of pride in his students, a pride when referring themselves to Chicana/o's, Mexicana/o's or Latina/o's. In the 1940's students were segregated because of their skin color, in the 1960's students were beat for speaking their language and given technical classes instead of college prep classes, in the 1980's there were anti-bilingualism reforms spreading nationwide until 1988 turning a new step in progress for Latino presence welcomed in classes (Ovando 2003).

Many Latina/o students still don't have the equal opportunity to pursue a higher education because of their background. Whether students are undocumented, first

generation, second generation or refugees it is reflecting on graduation rates in high school and college.

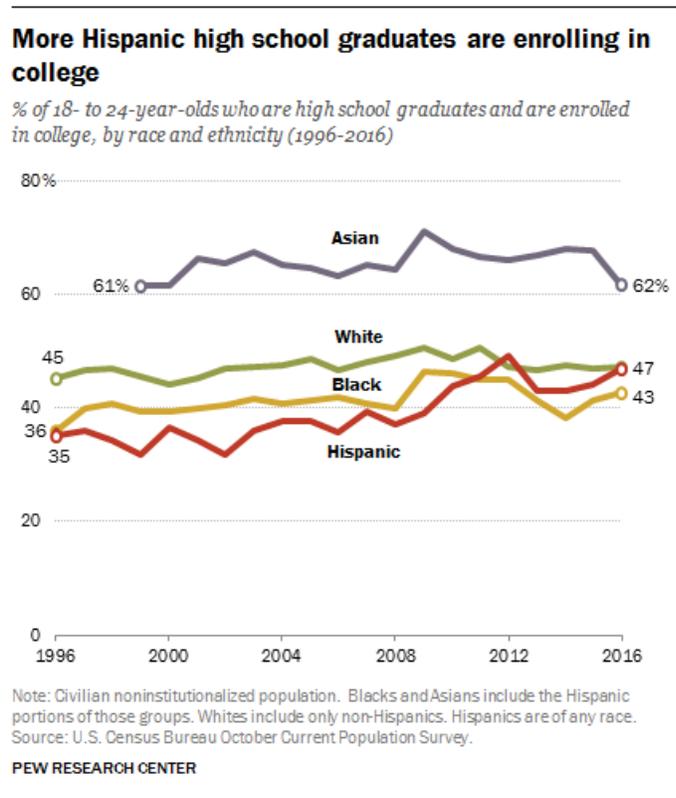
K-12 Bridging to 2-4-year institutes

In order to think about college or enrolling into a college, students would have to successfully finish high school first. In 1996, Latina/o's had the highest dropout rate. In 2016, Latina/o's still have the highest dropout rate but almost 24% decrease, starting at 34% going down to 10% (Gramlich 2017).



(Figure two, *Hispanic dropout rate hits new low, college enrollment at new high.*, Gramlich 2017).

Figure two is important to see the comparison between the progress made but also what needs more improvement. Especially when the dropout rate for Asians is 3% and their highest peak was only 8 % (Gramlich 2017). Now when seeing dropout rates reducing, the percentages for college enrollment would be affected. As of 2016, 47% of high school graduates aged 18-24 were enrolled in college (Gramlich 2017). In 1999, 1.3 million “Hispanics” were enrolled in colleges, now it has increased 180% reaching 3.6 million (Gramlich 2017). Latina/o’s are the largest college going minority and, in the chart, below shows how the rate has increased since 1996.



(Figure three, *Hispanic dropout rate hits new low, college enrollment at new high.*, Gramlich 2017).

Showing “Hispanics” starting at 35% increasing to 47%, Blacks starting at 36% increasing to 43%, Whites and Asians starting at 45% and 61% and going up 1% - 2%. This proves Latina/o’s have increased 12%, more than any other ethnicity.

With profound progress, this data also shows how low the difference the Latina/o percentage of enrollment is in comparison to Asians or Whites. There has been progress with the Latina/o community especially when it comes to enrollment rates and dropout rates. But what would the boundaries be for the percentage that are not enrolling or dropping out?

Presence in 2-year -4-year institutes

There are 50.7 million Latina/o’s in the U.S, the labor force is estimated to have almost 10.5 million new incoming Latina/o workers. Studies also say Latina/o’s will particularly work in the top 5 fastest growing occupations, such as healthcare, technology, STEM fields, education, and community service (Moreno 2016). Most of the fields require 4-year degrees, or more.

Understanding the racial gap in transferring into college institutions is important when seeing data relating to college enrollment. It is estimated that about 80% of community college students intend to transfer to a 4-year but roughly 23% successfully do within 6 years (Crisp & Nunez 2014). 51% Latina/o’s and 41%

African Americans enroll in community colleges across the U.S (Crisp & Nunez 2014), but are they attending and earning degrees?

Research by Castellanos and Gloria (2007) shows that 21 out of 100 Latino/a students will go to college, 8 will earn a graduate's degree and less than .2% will earn a doctorates degree (Castellano & Gloria 2007). When specifying the Chicano community Castellanos and Gloria mention that only 15 out of 100 Chicano/a students would attend college and only 4 would earn a graduate's degree (Castellanos & Gloria 2007). In more recent research Lerma et al. (2015) mentioned how the percentage of ph. D's awarded in 2012 jumped to 5.8% yet 74.3% were awarded to Whites (Lerma et al., 2015). This shows that there has been progress but for the percentages of Latina/o and Whites to have a difference of roughly 68% proving the gap in education. In comparison to white student percentages there is a lot of progress still yet to be made for the Latina/o community.

Are Schools Responsible?

Another issue that occurs is when students are pulled home to help and attend family needs, teachers will place these students in stereotypical molds, inappropriately challenging the students will to succeed.

Many Latina/o's come from poorer neighborhoods where there are higher student to teacher ratios, low graduation rates, and restricted access to a direct path to higher education. Relating back to figure 1, Gloria shows self-efficiency and self-esteem are important in a student's persistence to more education. With the Latina/o's population relatively young and college attendance low there should be a driving force getting Latina/o's not only into college but also graduate schools.

Latina/o's have been nearly absent in colleges and universities but not just as students, also as faculty and as teachers. Latina/o faculty help drive so many positive forces in a Latina/o's education. Since 2006 only 5% of 2-year college presidents are Latina/o's, in 4-year institutes there is a dropping 3.7%. Latina/o faculty lie at the bottom of the chart, they make up 64% in comparison to their white counterparts making up 73-75%. 1.4% of the 64% make up Latina/o full time teachers (Leon & Nevarez 2007). Latina/o faculty drive Latina/o quality of education, bring a broader range of viewpoints, they expose students to culture, and the overall progress.

Eastern Washington University

At Eastern Washington University (EWU) we have a high “Hispanic” turnout for freshmen, as it says on the homepage. There are multiple ways we could get exposed, EWU has roughly 17 classes

addressing Chicano and Latino

diversity along with 9 programs.

EWU’s faculty percentiles prove my

research, an example, there are only

4.9% of “Hispanic” or “Latino”



faculty yet there are 83.3% white faculty. With freshman being approximately 23-

24% of the school’s population and most being Latina/o’s there isn’t much of a

driving force. In further research it is proven that Latina/o faculty, especially

teachers, drive to progress and quality in our education, helping the gap decrease in

the bridge from high school to college.

Resources

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