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Literature Review of Key Theories and Concepts for Observation of Latino Student Success in Higher Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this literature review is to explore various factors that may influence Latino Student success in higher education. In this review, Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory provide the framework to better explore the aspects of white power and privilege, culture, Institutional racism, identity, self-efficacy, and formation of identity. A better understanding of ethnic identity through the LatCrit theoretical lens may help practitioners, administrators, and policy makers better understand the unique needs of Latino college students in order to provide appropriate resources for support and to promote success.

Overview

The endeavor to better understand the Latino student profile in higher education is multidimensional, multifaceted, and progressive. Our academic institutions are home to Latinos from various social classes, immigration statuses, generational statuses, linguistic abilities, cultural orientations, and experiential knowledge. Due to the scope of this topic, researchers may need to be flexible in their assessments, measures, and analysis when making considerations and generalizations of the Latino student group in higher education.

Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory

Specifically, the parameters the researcher has chosen for this study focus on the Latino student experience in higher education through the theoretical lens of Latino Critical Theory. Using this theoretical lens, the researcher reviewed literature on the following topics: (1) White power and privilege: The influence of dominant discourse and implicit rules to gain upward social mobility; (2) Culture: A review of the clashing social patterns between the dominant (White) culture and the subordinate (Latino) student culture. Furthermore, the research herein highlights the negotiations Latino students must navigate between the two different cultures in which he or she exists; (3) Institutional racism: The researcher looked at the role of the educational institution and how many keys to success may be embedded in invisible and implicit practices reinforced by dominant discourse and cultural attitudes by influential campus members; (4) Identity: The researcher reviewed literature on the negotiation and manipulation of power between the dominant and subordinate members of society. A review of historical colonization on the impact of identity is also discussed herein; (5) Self-efficacy: The researcher examines literature on the impact of self-perceptions carried by Latino students in academia through a cultural context; (6) Formation of ethnic identity: The researcher reviews the social construction in which ethnic identity may be formed. Furthermore, the researcher reviews the role of Hispanic Serving Institutions as it applies to ethnic identity.

Thus, while the literature on Latinos in higher education is vast and in constant growth, the topics listed above provide the reader with the scope and parameters of this study as chosen by the researcher.

White Power

Like CRT, LatCrit works on the premise that white power exists and works to maintain minority individuals at the margins of society. Thus, it is important to briefly explore the literature that may uncover the intersection of white power and privilege with Latino individuals in educational institutions.

One common marker of white power in society is the use of dominant discourse. This type of communication is often used to reinforce the common practices of the majority group while marginalizing minority individuals who may not appropriately interpret the messages found therein. Dominant or hegemonic discourse might be best described as the standard rhetoric found in politics, media outlets, and institutions of education. Hegemony can be described as "the ideological and cultural domination of one class by another, achieved by engineering consensus through controlling the content of cultural forms and major institutions" (Jay & Jay, 1991, p. 207). A pioneer in this subject matter, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) uses hegemony to describe the stratification between the dominant group members and the minority groups they by default, suppress (Stoddart, 2007, 193). In short, along with the verbal messages, agents of hegemonic discourse are able to marginalize other members of society with implicit and symbolic messages.

The use of power in social constructs can be defined as, "the reproductive or transformative capacity possessed by social structures, which may be seen as existing independently of the wills of the individual actors" (Jay & Jay, 1991, p. 378). Stoddart (1997) describes hegemonic power as power that aims to convince individuals and social classes to subscribe to the social values and norms of the dominant group. Within the parameters of any given social situation, the individual actors should be defined. In many of the world's societies, actors of power tend to be those of White or European heritage.

A Subject Matter Expert of cultural identity, Hall (1990), describes *White power* in the facet of *Presence Europeenne*. According to Hall, the concept of *Presence Europeenne* is about "exclusion, imposition, and expropriation" (Hall, 1990, p. 233). Hall's description of *Presence Europeene* may be observed alongside *White Privilege*. *White privilege* may be defined as, "the concrete benefits of access to resources and social rewards and the power to shape the norms and values of society, either unconsciously or consciously" (Wijeyesinghe, et al., 1997). Ladson-Billings (1998) finds, "Whites know they possess a property that people of color do not and that to possess it confers actions of citizenship not available to others" (p. 15). Because dominant discourse is often exclusively used by those in positions of power, the relationship between the powerful actors and powerless actors of society is constantly reinforced. For the purposes of this study, the powerful agent is the dominant White majority while the powerless agent is the Latino minority.

Culture

In the same way, culture can be defined by that which is perpetuated by the White members of society while subculture can be described as the cultural cohesiveness of a minority group (Jay & Jay, 1991). Stoddart (2007) finds, "the diffusion of culture throughout society represents a superficial democratization that is misleading" (p. 198). Stoddart (2007) emphasizes the culture industry promotes sameness between individuals while simultaneously "promoting a false sense of individuality" (p. 198). Ladson-Billings (1998) underscores this point in analysis of oppression of minority individuals in school curriculum. Ladson-Billings (1998) offers the following:

> The race-neutral or colorblind perspective, evident in the way the curriculum represents people of color, presumes a homogenized 'we' in a celebration of diversity…thus, students are taught erroneously that 'we are all immigrants,' and, as a result, African American, Indigenous, and Chicano (Latino) students are left with the guilt of failing to rise above their immigrant status like 'every other group' (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 18).

Thus, while society superficially champions uniqueness for all, the implicit message is that successful upward social mobility is in fact actually reserved for those with connections to the dominant group. Observing this issue through LatCrit reinforces the issue of white power as institutional power that disenfranchises minority members who do not possess the experiential knowledge necessary to properly negotiate the dominant discourse.

Institutional Racism

From philosophers such as Dewey (1859-1952), we know that the educational institution serves many purposes in any given society apart from merely providing an academic foundation for college and career readiness (Dewey, 1916). It is within educational institutions that much of what a society defines as culture is both explicitly and implicitly taught to students. Gramsci argued that the domination of ideas in social major institutions (education) promote acceptance of ideas and beliefs that benefited the ruling class (Stoddart, 2007, Hall Kells, et al., 2004).

While students from mainstream family backgrounds may not overtly experience oppression when engaging in cultural activities aimed at promoting the society's norms and values, disenfranchised students may in fact find themselves at odds with the teacher, staff, and overall institutional culture (Sheil & Rivera 2016). . With the rise of first generation and multi-generational immigrant students in education today, the student-educator gap may be widening and becoming much more complex.

While immigrant students arrive from a variety of backgrounds to our nation's schools, "the population projections of the Census Bureau estimate that Latinos may comprise as much as 25 percent of the national population in 2050, when people of primarily European ancestry are estimated to comprise only 52 percent" (Fraga & Segura, 2006, p. 279). This underscores the need to focus on the educational needs and social roles of Latinos in society today. As a result, many Latino individuals in the U.S. education system may be met with barriers as a direct result of institutional racism.

According to Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005), the campus environment is influenced by the following:

1. A historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of groups
2. The structural diversity or numerical representation of diverse people
3. The nature of interactions among diverse groups
4. Individual perceptions of the environment
5. External policies
6. Socio-historical contexts (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005, p. 236).

For Latino individuals, the institutional experience may be unique to that of their majority White counterparty.

Institutional racism may be defined as, "the network of institutional structures, policies, and practices that create advantages and benefits for Whites, and discrimination, oppression, and disadvantage for people from targeted racial groups" (Wijeyesinghe, Griffi, & Love, 1997). Because institutional racism may reflect other forms of racism in society, evidence of such in academic institutions may be invisible and simply accepted as the status quo by both the dominant and subordinate group members.

First, it may be recommended that practitioners understand their own discourse patterns and observe their institutional racism. Stoddart (2007) underscores Gramsci's observation that civil social institutions (such as schools) are "largely responsible for producing and disseminating hegemonic power" (Stoddart, 2007, p. 201). Moreover, it is important to recognize that, "the origin of the public school system in the U.S. was related to a conscious attempt at 'Americanizing' immigrant children" (Fraga & Segura, 2006, p. 284). While various opinions may exist, it is arguable that today's school house is still implicitly trying to Americanize children through hegemony in curriculum, discourse, and school staff, and teachers. Caution should be placed in a discussion of "Americanization" as this term is often associated with factors shared predominantly by the White social class. Thus, this term is not only politically charged and potentially insulting to the foreigners it wishes to convert, but may be equally distasteful to fellow Americans who are marginalized by default of the word association.

Because the profile of educators in our nation's K-12 schools and in higher education tends to reflect the dominant group, the beliefs and values of this group are passed on to the institution's students. Given that academic institutions are widely run by the dominant class, minority students may experience levels of implicit or explicit institutional racism (Tienda, 2013). While not all forms of racism may appear overt, the fact that the culture of the dominant class is reinforced with academic policy, programs, and faculty selection should not be overlooked.

An observation of institutional racism through the lens of LatCrit may lead researchers to a better understanding of the underrepresentation of Latino students in higher education. Many K-12 schools around the United States, have undergone *white flight* which suggests members who are more likely to form the dominant group leave areas that are heavily populated with minority members, have lower socioeconomic statuses, and more oppressed opportunities for upward social mobility (Fraga & Segura, 2006; Wade, 2001; Prins, 2007; Tienda, 2013). Therefore, whereas members of the dominant class may use their capital to improve their quality of life, minority members are subject to navigate the social systems within specific institutions and neighborhoods as determined by the hegemonic group.

Institutional racism is complex and can be examined through a variety of lenses. Institutional discrimination may occur due to, "prejudice or the desire to protect one's economic or political interests" (Prins, 2007, p. 289).

One example noted in Prins's empirical study found, "open enrollment policies enable administrators to justify the approval of White student transfers" (Prins, 2007, p. 290). Furthermore, it has been noted that "the dominant logic is that a model desegregation program is one that insures that White are happy and to not leave the school system altogether" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 21). Because many of the institution's policy and decision makers form part of the dominant class, their hegemonic values may be reflected in the decisions made that impact the demographics of the student population and the infrastructure for students who may be considered disenfranchised.

For Latino students, institutional racism may reinforce marginalization as weaker infrastructure (for example, a lack of programs that heed to the unique needs of Latino students) continues to oppress this minority group as it may debilitate the prospects of gaining social capital. Moreover, "the absence and alienation of Latinos/as from U.S. higher education is an issue of linguistic racism" (Hall Kells, et al., 2004, p. 2). Despite the fact that "an estimated 24 million Americans speak Spanish as a native language, our literacy education, both in English and Spanish, systematically ignores, devalues, stigmatizes, or marginalizes Spanish" (Hall Kells, et al., 2004, p. 2).

Because language is an intimate facet of self, a negative stereotype of the use of one's native language may risk attributing to a negative sense of self during social identity formation. Ngo (2008) finds, "at the same time that others use discourses to identify us, we also draw on discourses to make meaning for ourselves" (Ngo, 2008, p. 8). To this end, Hall Kells et al. (2004) suggests, functional literacy practices too often become misdiagnosed as illiteracy when evaluated from an English Only, academically privileged point of view" (Hall Kells, et al., 2004, p. 3). Thus, it is imperative that practitioners recognize the unique needs of their minority students as to champion their differences while simultaneously providing assistance where needed. While institutional policy and decisions may be produced at the macro level, it is arguable that this type of negotiation happens on a very micro level, between individual teachers and students. Therefore, if it is desired to be improved, the concept of institutional racism may need to be examined both internally and externally at all levels of a given institution and society.

In brief, institutionalized racism benefits members of the dominant White social class while continuing to marginalize the subordinate Latino social class in institutions of academia today (Fraga & Segura, 2006; Wade, 2001; Prins, 2007; Tienda, 2013; Sheil, & Rivera, 2016). This exchange fosters the symbolic, tangible, and invisible social power of the hegemonic group. For Latino students entering the educational system, their sense of self may ultimately be impacted by the influences of the institutions they attend. If it is accepted that identity comes from a negotiation of external stereotypes and internal beliefs and values, then Latino students will be charged with knowing the difference between the two.

Hall Kells et al (2004) holds that, "our students will be changed in the academic cultures they join, and in turn our academic cultures will and should change to reflect their presence" (p. 5). Because of this, these issues may need to be discussed in an authentic manner with agents from all social classes. If Latino students should wish to gain the keys to the dominant culture, he or she may risk marginalization from their own families, neighborhoods, friends, and other members of their minority group (Ngo, 2008). In this sense, society me be asking Latinos to trade one form of marginalization for another in order to gain leverage on the social ladder that has come to define the citizens of the United States.

Through the lens of LatCrit, individuals are forced to recognize the existence of institutional racism in schools, colleges, and universities. By using the narrative of specific Latino students who are faced with this issue, researchers may gain a better understanding of factors that may contribute to Latino student enrollment and persistence in higher education despite the limiting factors previously mentioned.

Identity

Within the Latino narrative, the LatCrit lens allows for exploration of social and ethnic identity of Latino students in the United States. For many Latino individuals, identity is built through a myriad of factors from their family experiences within their home cultures and experiences with the dominant culture within schools and in society. Stoddart (2007) points out, "It is the embodiment of hegemony in everyday common sense, through the mundane activities connected with work, school, the family and the church, that secures the consent of capital's subaltern classes" (p. 203). For the White dominant culture, discourse, and overall dominance to survive, the members of the subculture are subordinate and relatively powerless (Jay &Jay, 1991, p. 503).

As a result, Latino immigrants in the United States often find themselves charged with the position to negotiate the workings of their subculture with the implicit messages of the dominant culture. It is through these negotiations that much of social identity development takes place (Hall, 1990; Fraga & Segura, 2006; Turcios-Cotto & Milan, 2013).

Researching the ethnic and social identity of Latinos may be paramount factors in better understanding the underrepresentation of Latinos students in public higher education in Tennessee (Turcios-Cotto & Milan, 2013).. Thus, it is important to explore the complexities that may lead to the formation of self of minority individuals as possible contributing factors to educational gaps.

For purposes of this study, ethnic identity is defined as a psychological construction that is assumed to be of importance to the formation of self-concept which in turn impacts the behavior and perceptions of the individual (Castillo, Conoley, Choi-Pearson, Archuleta, D.J., Phoummarath, M.J., Van Landingham, A, 2006 & Phinney, 1996). Beyond this definition, it is important to note that achieved ethnic identity may be a negotiation of stereotypes (Phinney, J.S., and Ong 2007). In other words, gaining an actualized ethnic identity may require individuals to acknowledge the social stereotypes about their ethnicity and decide if they accept or reject these notions.

One such perspective of social identity development may be noted by Stoddart (2007) who asserts that, “colonized peoples see themselves through the eyes of the colonizer, as the marginalized other to a valorized European culture” (p. 214). Important to emphasize is that colonized minorities are not unique to the United States. Thus, while there are many aspects of identity formation to consider, many Latino individuals often have to negotiate their identity from the Spanish colonization of their country of origin first and then also find their path to identity in a culture that is still reeling with the consequences of a British colonization in the United States (Hall Kells, et al, 2004; Hall, 1990; Wade, 2001; Turcios-Cotto & Milan, 2013). This example of social identity formation underscores the impact of hegemonic discourse on Latino minority individuals. In essence, the formation of identity appears to start first extrinsically before it is internalized.

Another perspective offered by Stuart Hall (1990) suggests that identity may be disenfranchised to minority individuals as a result of dominance from the mainstream group. As a result, the sense of self may never be quite formed, but rather transformed or reformed throughout life. Hall (1996) finds, “identity constructions involve a double movement, where we are identified by a history of discourses, ideas and images of who we are, and identify ourselves by responding to the representations that have already identified us.” Thus, perhaps proper navigation of this process would call on Latinos in the United States to be able to properly recognize such embedded, silent social structures and choose to accept or reject these structures as part of their identity.

Due to the social power of White individuals in the United States, many members of this majority group are able to choose if they want to recognize their ethnicity and to what degree it will impact their concept of self (Phinney, 1996). On the other hand, minority individuals who bear strong physical features associated with their ethnic background are often forced to recognize their ethnicity due to the social marginalization brought about by the White majority (Phinney, 1996). Because identity cannot be separated from the culture(s) which build and structure it, Latino adolescents often find themselves caught between the dominant White mainstream culture and their Latino subculture which has been transformed upon immigration to the United States (Erikson, 1950; Guanipa & Guanipa, 1998; Rothe, 2004; Turcios-Cotto & Milan, 2013). As a result, minority individuals who find themselves in this category may construct a negative ethnic identity as it may be acquired through marginalization and oppression coupled with a negotiation of negative stereotypes of the dominant group.

Self-efficacy

History, academia, and popular culture have provided society with several examples of highly successful individuals who have developed resilient coping mechanisms and abilities to overcome challenges in the face of adversity. Regardless of the individual’s discipline or background, the overarching factor that may contribute to success in life may be a high sense of perceived self-efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy can be defined as a person’s beliefs about their capabilities to overcome any obstacle presented in life (Bandura, 1994). Specifically, self-efficacy regulates the way humans perceive their circumstances and their future possibilities. Bandura finds, “they affect whether individuals think in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways; how well they motivate themselves and persevere in the face of difficulties; the quality of their emotional life, and the choices thy make at important decisional points which set the course of life paths” (Bandura, 2002; Bandura, 1994).

In short, self-efficacy may be the dividing factor between resilient individuals and those who choose to be dominated by life circumstances. Understanding self-efficacy within the parameters of Latinos in higher education may aid to better understanding of Latino student matriculation and persistence in higher education.

It is essential to the Social Cognitive Theory to underscore the fact that an individual's perceived sense of self-efficacy will ultimately determine the experiences and choices one pursues in life. As a result, the original choices as determined appropriate by one's perceived sense of self-efficacy will provoke changing environments which in turn will be navigated by that individual's ability to regulate their emotions and cognitions in the given situation. A cyclical action, with one action causing a variety of reactions, an individual's perceived sense of self-efficacy can ultimately support or inhibit healthy life choices throughout all stages in life.

Theoretical Framework of Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy may be best understood by unpacking it first as it relates generally to the lifespan. Bandura (1994) suggests perceived self-efficacy can be observed through stages as life such as infancy, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, the middle years, and the advancing age. Sociocognitive theorists suggest babies are born without any sense of self (Bandura 1994). As a result, the sense of self is molded through shared experiences between the baby and the environment. Infants who begin to gain a successful perceived sense of self-efficacy must perceive actions a part of themselves (Bandura, 1994). In other words, from the beginning of life, humans must be able to measure their own effort in any action or reaction caused. Without the environmental reinforcement, the individual may be less connected to behavior causation.

Initially, it is suggested that the environment and experiences therein are shaped by the influences of the family. As the baby turns into a toddler and eventually school aged, peers begin to play an increasingly important role in the formation of individual self-efficacy. Bandura suggests it is through peer relationships that social comparisons are formed as peers both judge and verify one's self efficacy (Bandura, 1994). This said, Bandura also cautions that because peers are often selected by choice (with that choice being impacted by prior perceptions of self-efficacy), achieving successful self-efficacy may be skewed from early on. This underscores the importance of the role of parents, family, teachers, and administrators to help model appropriate behavior and help children to select peers who will help their child to form a healthy sense of self.

Once in the school environment, academic self-efficacy of students may be impacted by the perceived self-efficacy of the teachers and collective staff of the educational environment in which the individual learns (Bandura, 1994). If the teacher has a high sense of self-efficacy in the classroom, she may be more likely to impose such beliefs on her students and to improve educational practices within her classroom despite any obstacles she may face. Unfortunately, the opposite may also hold true suggesting that teachers with a low perceived self-efficacy may be less successful in meeting the educational needs of her students and motivating them to succeed. Adolescence provides a platform for individuals to learn how to deal with life matters (Bandura, 1994). Yet again, parents and teachers can be particularly beneficial to their teen during this stage by scaffolding with positive life choices and guiding the youth in gaining affective copying mechanisms.

By young adulthood, individuals have arguably shaped a more solid sense of self-efficacy. A high sense of self-efficacy during this stage in life may lead individuals to pursue successful careers and personal relationships. The middle years should yield a more stable sense of self-efficacy to help individuals continue to foster the decisions made during young adulthood. This time of life is particularly difficult as people must manage a variety of self-efficacies. For example, parental efficacy, occupational efficacy, and relational efficacy are arguably the most noted types of efficacy needed during this time of life. If one does not have an increased sense of perceived self-efficacy, the multi-tasking required to be successful in various arenas of life will be greatly challenged or inhibited. Finally, in the advancing stage of life, perceived self-efficacy is tested once again as individuals tend to measure their capabilities. Their observations of what they can and cannot do will ultimately lead to life decisions that will impact the quality of the last stage of their life.

Social Cognitive Theory uses three modes of agency within the framework for perceived self-efficacy: personal, proxy, and collective. According to Bandura (2002), "personal agency is exercised individually; proxy agency happens when people secure desired outcome by influencing others to act on their behalf; and collective agency is when people act in concert to shape their future" (Bandura, 2002, p. 269).

Although recognized as three separate parts, Bandura cautions that both proxy and collective agency require a certain level of personal agency to be successful. Thus, these three elements should not be viewed as separate entities, but rather as interdependent factor that help to shape a perceived self-efficacy.

The beliefs an individual has about one's own potential or capability in a given task (self-efficacy) regulates human functioning through cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional processes (Bandura, 2002, p. 270). Table 1 provides the efficacy-activated processes as described by Bandura (1994) for an individual with a high sense of perceived self-efficacy.

Table 1: Efficacy-Activated Processes for Individuals with High Self-Efficacy

Cognitive	Motivational	Affective	Decisional
Ability to visualize success	Use forethought to anticipate likely outcomes	Perceived coping self-efficacy regulates avoidance behavior as well as anxiety arousal.	Influences the types of activities and types of activities and environments people choose
Remain task oriented amidst daily demands	Use 3 Cognitive Motivators: Causal attainment Outcome expectancies Cognized goals	Ability to control thought processes that produce stress and depression	Impact career choice
Set challenging goals		Reduce health impairing habits.	

Furthermore, Bandura suggests that there are four main influences that ultimately form an individual's perceived self-efficacy: Mastery experiences in which an individual learns resiliency skills by overcoming obstacles; vicarious experiences in which an individual is influenced by modeled behavior by those around them; social persuasion experiences in which individuals are motivated by others; and psychological and affective states from which individuals can judge their capabilities (Bandura, 1994; Bandura, 2002; Montas-Hunter, 2012).

Out of all of these influences, mastery experiences are considered by Bandura to be the most powerful (Bandura, 1994). Bandura finds, "a strong sense of personal self-efficacy is vital for success regardless of whether it is achieved individually or by group members putting their personal capabilities to the best collective use" (Bandura, 2002, p. 273). In other words, it through mere trial and error and the learning of self-regulatory habits to overcome obstacles that helps to build positive self-efficacy of individuals. One may be more likely to positively impact others once high personal self-efficacy is understood and achieved.

Academic Self-efficacy in a Cultural Context

Although Bandura's theory of self-efficacy can be observed in a variety of facets of life, a focus on academic self-efficacy through a cultural lens may lead to an improved understanding of Latino college students. Bandura finds, "cultures are diverse and dynamic social systems not static monoliths" (Bandura, 2002, p. 269). This is significant to self-efficacy as it recognizes that the path to which individuals achieve successful self-efficacy may indeed vary depending on the cultural environment. In his observance of self-efficacy cross-culturally, Bandura believes, "there is commonality in basic agentic capabilities and mechanisms of operation, but diversity in the culturing of these inherent capabilities" (Bandura, 2002, p. 273). In comparing studies of cross-cultural child development, Bandura found, "those (students) from countries with authoritarian educational systems have a lower sense of efficacy to take charge of their own learning" (Bandura, 2002, p. 280). This can contribute to decreased academic and personal self-efficacy as, "a low sense of efficacy to regulate one's own motivation and learning activities bears importantly on intellectual self-development" (Bandura, 2002, p. 281). This underscores the need to equip students with practical learning habits throughout their educational experience in order to help foster reliance and increased self-efficacy to pursue academic goals.

Moreover, in his cross-cultural meta-analysis, Bandura found, "in the more individualistically oriented American social system, perceived self-efficacy to regulate one's learning and master academic activities is a good predictor of academic aspirations and level of academic achievement" (Bandura, 2002, p. 281).

Furthermore, Bandura found, “belief in one’s academic efficacy serves a similar function in academic attainments in Chinese, German, Italian, and Korean cultures” (Bandura, 2002, p. 281).

An observation of cross-cultural academic self-efficacy is particularly timely in a growing global educational environment throughout the United States today. Gaining a working knowledge of academic self-efficacy may assist practitioners and administrators in creating educational environment conducive to fostering high self-efficacy, resiliency, and functional self-regulatory life skills. Increasingly, academic institutions and work places are housing individuals who arrive with diverse backgrounds. For individuals who have a home culture distinct to that of mainstream society, self-efficacy skills may contribute to the successful transition between the two. In her study of Latina leaders in higher education, Montas-Hunter (2012) finds, “constant navigation or bridging of two cultures requires high levels of ethnic identity and high levels of acculturation”(Montas-Hunter, 2012, p. 325). Thus, self-efficacy studies of individuals from various cultures in the United States may wish to observe the subjects first within their home culture and within society to note how the process of self-efficacy may or may not assist in helping individuals lead resilient lives.

While many different cultures contribute to the multifaceted make up of the United Stated educational system, the Latino student population is suggested to be one of the fastest growing minorities in schools today (Fry, 2002). With the increase of immigration and a lack of policy reform, it may be important to seek out the needs unique to this student population in order to incorporate measures to help ensure academic success. Viewing immigration through the lens of self-efficacy may contribute to a better understanding of both immigrant students and the families from which they come. Bandura states, “migrants who are assured of their coping efficacy feel challenged rather than threatened by the impediments to a new life. Beliefs of personal efficacy enhance successful migratory adaptation” (Bandura, 2002, p. 284).

Many studies have been conducted to observe the self-efficacy of Latino students throughout the educational endeavors. In their study, Orange and Murakami Ramalho (2013) observed self-efficacy perceptions and factors of 10th and 11th grade Hispanic students in Texas. In their observation, the researchers discovered Latino students scored significantly lower than their counterparts on self-reported use of self-regulatory skills and behaviors. Furthermore, their study revealed that the results support the hypothesis that students that have high self-efficacy tend to use more self-regulatory skills and behaviors than students who do not (p. 52). The authors suggest that appropriate intervention for these students may assist in increasing positive academic self-efficacy for preparation for higher education and degree completion.

In their study linking Latino students to self-efficacy, the researchers found that students with a higher sense of biculturalism and bilingualism also bared higher academic self-efficacy (Buriel, R., Perez, W., DeMent., T.L., Chavez, D.V., Moran, V.R., 1998) Perhaps this study suggest that a more thorough understanding of self can lead to increased self-confidence and ultimately an increase in overall positive self-efficacy and self-regulation skills. In their study, Gonzalez et al. (2012) find, “In general, adolescents with greater ethnic centrality or importance also reported greater levels of motivation around academics, greater feelings of connection to their schools, and a more positive sense of self-esteem and well-being” (Gonzalez et al., 2012, p. 106).

Furthermore, Kao and Thompson’s (2003) study of educational achievement, supports Bandura’s theory that family and environment greatly impact personal self-efficacy. According to the authors, family background and immigration policy influence education achievement levels of minority youth. As a result, the student’s personal and academic self-efficacies are also directly impacted by such factors. Another noteworthy study of Latinos and self-efficacy conducted by Driscoll and Torres (2013) found that self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between acculturative stress and severity of depression symptoms amongst Latinos. Driscoll and Torres’s findings support Bandura’s theories that positive self-efficacy contributes to a healthier sense of self and improved quality of life. Gonzalez et al. (2012) finds, “a highly positive sense of self-efficacy might allow one to cope with perceived barriers and continue to move forward amidst challenges” (Gonzalez et al., 2012, p. 105).

Social cognitive theorists believe that teaching positive academic self-efficacy to students may be achieved through a variety of methods. Within the realm of higher education, Santos and Reigadas (2002) found that a Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP) can serve as a medium to increase college self-efficacy and goal definition (Santos & Reigadas, 2002, p. 40). Specifically, Santos and Reigadas noted that an FMP can be particularly beneficial to Latino students. The authors find, “planned mentoring programs may be a productive way of addressing the college adjustment needs of Latino students” (Santos & Reigadas, 2002, p. 41).

Furthermore, the authors find, “a relationship with a mentor may expand the student’s awareness of resources available for coping successfully with demanding academic conditions and, by implication, his or her sense of personal competence and self-efficacy” (Santos & Reigadas, 2002, p. 41). In her study of Latino leaders, Montas-Hunter (2012) found, “all participants in the study indicated that their academic experiences, including mentors, were a value that had an impact on their leadership career” (Montas-Hunter, 2012, p. 328). The need for a FMP may be further underscored by Gonzalez et al.’s finding that, “for students in emerging immigrant communities, if the parents are unfamiliar with strategies for working successfully with immigrant families, the Latino adolescents may be left with very little guidance” (Gonzalez et al., 2012, p. 113). Furthermore, for optimal FMP outcomes, Santos and Reigadas suggest mentors and mentees to be of like gender and ethnicity and to meet frequently.

Beyond building mentoring relationships with students, Kao and Thompson (2002) point out that students who are placed in a college preparatory track in high school produce such positive side effects as, “high academic achievement, measures of motivation, and educational aspirations and attainment” (Kao & Thompson, 2002, p. 424). Thus, this suggests that students’ academic self-efficacy may be increased merely by the fact that they are in a structured program where academic expectations are increased.

Orange and Ramalho (2013) found that early intervention for minority adolescents showing low self-efficacy may positively impact students and help to increase overall positive self-efficacy. Specifically, the authors suggest a self-efficacy exercise for the classroom. In this exercise, teachers are to pair students identified as having low self-efficacy with others who are identified as having high self-efficacy. The low-self-efficacy students are then prompted to interview their high self-efficacy counterparts with a series of questions based on theoretical framework provided by Bandura. Ideally, low self-efficacy students will have the opportunity to interview several high self-efficacy peers to help create a profile of the best habits of successful students.

This suggestion by Orange and Ramalho (2013) follows Bandura’s suggestion of the impact of social influences on the formation of self-efficacy. This activity may specifically build on vicarious and social persuasion influences that contribute to the individual’s overall sense of self. However, as noted by the authors, certain limitations to this exercise may exist such as limited dichotic student pairings or perhaps even the teacher’s incorrect analysis of student self-efficacy levels. While an excellent measure to consider, practitioners should be cautioned to perform this activity only after thorough research has been done and trust established within the classroom between the students and teacher and between the students themselves.

Implications for Latinos in Higher Education

The research noted may suggest a student population that bares a high sense of self-efficacy will likely arrive on their institution of higher education with stronger self-regulatory skills, improved abilities to cope with challenges and set-backs, and an overall resilient attitude toward completing their college degree (Kao & Thompson, 2002; Gonzalez et al, 2012; Orange & Ramalho, 2013). While much literature in the field may focus on self-efficacy intervention in the primary and secondary academic years, higher education may also benefit from recognizing this important issue and implement measures to help their students become better self-motivators and self-regulators which may ultimately lead to retention and degree completion.

Low college attendance rates of Hispanics are due in part to low high school graduation rates (Kao & Thompson, 2002, p. 430). As a result, it may be advised for institutions of higher education to not seek interventions autonomously for Latino student enrollment, retention, and graduation, but rather to partner with neighboring K-12 academic institutions to collaborate on establishing measures and bridging programs for students to successfully graduate high school and transfer to college.

Another measure that institutions of higher education may wish to pursue is to observe the overall institutional and student cultures on campus. Specifically, this information herein encourages institutions to observe their culture as it relates to that of their minority students housed on campus. Gonzalez et al. (2012) finds, “how students perceived that other viewed their ethnic group influenced their college-going self-efficacy beliefs and highlights the importance of a school environment that supports ethnic minority students” (Gonzalez et al., 2012, p. 114). Hurtado et al. (1996) underscores this with their findings that, “Latino students tend to have more negative perceptions of the campus climate than white students” (Hurtado et al., 1996, p. 138). In their empirical study, Hurtado et al. (1996) found, “perceptions of racial/ethnic tension was directly associated with lower levels of personal-emotional adjustment, attachment to the institution and adjustment in the academic and social arenas” (Hurtado et al., 1996, p. 151).

In short, if an institution does not recognize the unique needs of Latino students on campus, Latino students may feel undervalued and develop a sense of distrust with the college's administration and faculty, which in turn may ultimately negatively impact self-efficacy factors which contribute to student retention and graduation.

Specifically, Hurtado et al. (1996) find that Latino student adjustment may be impacted by, "a college climate that recognizes student interaction across race/ethnicity, perceptions of the climate for intergroup relations, experiences of overt discrimination, as well as the college's structural diversity in terms of Hispanic enrollment" (Hurtado et al., 1996, p. 138). Thus, institutions of higher education may wish to form a task committee charged with observing the current campus climate and then form institution specific recommendations for programs that may benefit Latino students based on the qualitative and quantitative data collected. Nevertheless, Santos and Reigadas (2002) caution:

> Because education is the most important determinant of economic success later in life, university programs that actively seek to enhance academic performance of Latino students should be carefully evaluated to understand how fully how effectively these programs promote academic success in at-risk students (Santos, p. 41)

As a result, while implementing unique programs for Latino students in higher education is an ideal consideration, it is important that these programs be monitored to ensure students are progressing toward the intended outcome.

As a result of the changing demographics of educational institutions today, it is important for administrators, policy makers, faculty, and staff to consider the unique contribution of self-efficacy to overall student retention and graduation. Through the literature reviewed, it is recommended that the organizational culture of academic institutions be reviewed and assessed with particular attention to the relationship between the institution's organizational culture and the culture of the institution's minority students. With a more thorough understanding of self-efficacy, administrators and faculty may be able to implement programs and activities on campus to better support and connect with their students.

The Formation of Ethnic Identity of Latinos in Higher Education

Both socially and academically, the discussion of ethnic identity in the United States often targets Latinos as they are our nation's fastest growing minority group. First, it is necessary to observe the variety of terms used to identify this minority group. Since ethnic labeling is of particular importance to the notion of ethnic identity, the use of ethnically related terms to describe minorities cannot be ignored. During the 1970s, the United States Bureau of the Census adopted the term Hispanic to group together and identify all of the recent immigrants from Spanish-speaking counties (Comas-Díaz, 2001). While the term, Hispanic is still active in our vernacular, Latino is another term commonly used to describe Spanish-speaking natives living in the United States. Although the term Hispanic implies a direct connection to Spain, the term Latino may be a more accepted and timely term as it implies more inclusion and may be less historically and politically charged (Comas-Díaz, 2001; Torres, 2004). Nevertheless, it is important to note that neither label may be appropriate or sufficient for individuals who seek to acquire a realized sense of ethnic identity in the United States.

The fluidity of labels of US Latinos of subsequent generational statuses is an important component in the discussion of ethnic identity of Latinos. While some Latinos choose to label themselves with their parents' or grandparents' national identity, others may choose to use a hyphenated American title, Hispanic, Latino, or a hybrid of a variety of geo-social terms (Torres, 2004). Because many first generation immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries to the United States enter this country with an already established sense of self, their ethnic identity may ultimately be challenged by the decision to adopt either the term Hispanic or Latino. While some may add this term to the myriad of their already complex ethnic identity structure, perhaps others may use it to replace their national identity in an effort to acculturate into the dominant culture. It is important to highlight these semantic differences as all of these terms contribute to the notion of ethnic identity for those who make up this unique group.

Researchers interested in observing the labels of US Latinos must consider factors such as country of origin, generational status, US geographical location, and historical and political views of the individual being studies (Phinney, 1996). Researchers are obligated to recognize these aspects when investigating issues that impact Latinos. In this study, individuals with heritage from a Spanish-speaking country will be identified as Latino. Also important to note is that the term Latino is used to identify both males and females.

In Spanish, females are called *Latinas* and males, *Latinos*. However, the masculine term, *Latino* can be used contextually to describe both genders in the Latino community.

Ethnic identity is often unpacked first by considering it as a layered progression towards understanding and actualization (Phinney, 1996). It is suggested that there are three aspects of ethnicity that influence psychological identity:

1. The cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors that distinguish ethnic groups.
2. The subjective sense of ethnic group membership that is held by group members.
3. The experiences associated with minority status, including powerlessness, discrimination, and prejudice (Phinney, 1996).

Although Phinney's process towards ethnic identity may be actively initiated in the teenage years, it is not clear if or when the final actualization stage will occur. This information is of particular importance when observing Latino students in higher education.

Depending on the age of the Latino college student, an individual's ethnic identity formation may still be in progress, and therefore highly influenced by the experiences in higher education. Furthermore, empirical research by Castillo et al (2006) found that Latino students who have a heightened sense of ethnic identity are more sensitive to the majority dominance of the organizational culture presented in higher education.

For college students, Torres (1999) uses the Bicultural Orientation Model to observe the stages of reconciliation Latinos go through during higher education. Within this model, there are four different types of orientations a Latino college student may experience:

> The first is Bicultural Orientation, which indicates a comfort level with both cultures. The second is a Latino/Hispanic Orientation, which indicates greater comfort with the culture of origin. The third is an Anglo Orientation, which indicates a greater comfort with the majority culture. And finally, the Marginal Orientation indicates discomfort with both cultures and may indicate conflict within the individual (Torres, 2003).

By using these measures when observing Latino college students, researchers may be better able to understand the role of ethnic identity for the individual and how the development of such impacts higher education.

For U.S. Latino individuals, adhering to a particular set of cultural values, behavior, or membership is varied and complex as the umbrella formed by the term *Latino* includes those from several differing regions. What may be an ethnic identifier for Mexican individuals may be quite different for Central or South American individuals. An accurate investigation on this topic would require for an exhaustive study to be done to measure the identity markers of US Latinos from each of the countries of origin represented within our country's Latino population. Nevertheless, the research currently in this field suggests the ability for Latino individuals to name themselves may not only provide a platform for unification, but may also lead to liberation and power (Comas-Díaz, 2001). As a result, perhaps it is Phinney's (1996) third observation of identity that is arguably the most unifying as it does not specifically stratify Latinos, but rather creates a sense of membership based on experiences shared by all members of minority groups, Latino or otherwise.

Ethnic identity of Latino college students may change during the college years. Some factors that may cause this shift include cultural dissonance and a change of relationship with the environment (Torres, 2003). This noted it should be taken into account that not all ethnic minority individuals will go through this process. While it is true that ethnic minorities are much more cognizant of their ethnic roots than that of their mainstream counterparts, it is incorrect to assume that all minority individuals will attempt to self-reflect on their ethnicity.

Pioneers in the field of ethnic identity have speculated the stages through which Latino youth in the United States encounter ethnic identity (Phinney 1996; Torres, 1999). However, less highlighted in the research is the cross section of the organizational culture of institutions of higher education and Latino student self-discovery. For many Latino youth who come from homogenous Latino US neighborhoods, the need for ethnic labeling may be of less importance to attributing to a realized sense of self (Castillo et al, 2006; Phinney, 1996). By contrast, US Latinos who come from predominantly majority White neighborhoods have shown to be acutely aware of the differences between their ethnic background and that of their majority counterparts (Schneider & Ward, 2003; Turcios-Cotto & Milan, 2013).

A review of the literature of ethnic identity of Latino students in higher education uncovers several research deficits that speak to the complexity of the phenomenon itself. To ensure a proper investigation on this topic, research should consider the following factors that may impact the level of achieved ethnic identity of individuals. While not a conclusive list, some factors (in any given order) may include:

1. Generational status
2. Socioeconomic status
3. Legal status
4. First Time Freshman Status
5. Language ties
6. Connection to country of origin through family displacement and/or remittances
7. Level of Latino heterogeneity in home environment
8. Semantic differences between the terms of Latino individuals (Phinney, 1996).

Perhaps a complete study would seek to find out if these factors work together to unite and strengthen the minority group or if they conflict and ultimately leave the group more divided within the community. Phinney (1996) suggests that research should hold ethnicity constant, and to "study processes within (ethnic) groups, rather than make comparisons across groups" (p. 924).

The organizational culture of many institutions of higher education may be underprepared to recognize the unique needs of Latino college students (Tienda, 2013). This, coupled with factors that leave minority Latino students underprepared when compared to their college counterparts, may lead to their lack of retention and graduation rates from colleges and universities across the United States today. Other literature appears to suggest that a denial of an individual's ethnic heritage yields a more positive outcome in overall acculturation rates and as a result, degree completion (Schneider & Ward, 2003). Thus, this may suggest that the more removed a person is from his or her ethnic Latino culture, the easier he or she may adapt to the mainstream culture of the institution.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions

In contrast, Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) may show to be a better fit for Latinos who consider themselves to have an increased sense of ethnic identity. These institutions have adopted measures to intentionally cater to the unique needs of Latino college students and provide a culture that embraces the minority student with a school environment that is reflective of the home environment from which many Latino students come. In order to be an HSI, total Hispanic enrollment must constitute a minimum of 25% of the total enrollment (Hispanic association of colleges and universities, 2011).

A complete list of HSI regions and number of post-secondary institutions, including both community colleges and four-year universities can be found below:

Table 2: Hispanic-Serving Institutions in The United States (including Puerto Rico)

Region	Number of Hispanic-Serving Institutions
Arizona	11
California	79
Colorado	8
Connecticut	1
Florida	9
Illinois	6
Kansas	2
Massachusetts	1
New Jersey	8
New Mexico	18
New York	12
Pennsylvania	1
Puerto Rico	32
Texas	48
Washington	3

Hispanic association of colleges and universities, 2011

Although there are 239 Hispanic-Serving Institutions, these schools make up a small minority of the overall institutions serving the majority of Latino students in higher education today. More research is needed to observe the effectiveness of HIS's for student retention and graduate rates, and their overall sense of self in comparison to that of mainstream institutions.

While there is much literature in the field observing Latinos in higher education (Castillo et al, 2006; Phinney 1996; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Schneider & Ward, 2003; Torres 1999;Torres, 2003; Torres 2004, Villalpando, 2004; Wassmer, Moore, & Shulock, 2004), perhaps the current overarching results show a clash between Latino students' home culture and that of the organizational culture of the institution of higher education (Castillo et al, 2006; Torres 1999; Torres, 2003). A better understanding of ethnic identity through the LatCrit theoretical lens may help practitioners, administrators, and policy makers understand and heed to the unique needs of this minority.

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