



The Journal of Education Research and Interdisciplinary Studies



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~From the Office of the Executive Director and Founder~



Welcome to the Fall2019/Winter 2020 Edition of the Journal of Educational Research and Interdisciplinary Studies. It is an honor and privilege to share the Journal of Educational Research and Interdisciplinary Studies [JERIS] with you. The aim is to provide quality educational research and refined educational practices that will afford you as the reader to be empowered as a leader/practitioner as well as serve as an active transformational change agent within your higher educational institution.

Thus, the [JERIS] is published four times throughout the year allowing current educational researchers to conduct thorough research in a number of academic areas. In doing so, JERIS is committed to publishing information that will assist higher educational institutions with the needed tools to improve the overall quality of instruction, leadership, teaching and learning, retention (administration, faculty and students), student engagement—while providing additional scholarly resources that will aid in supporting diversity and multicultural education. Lastly—I asking you to support [JERIS] by sharing it with your esteem colleagues and encourage them to read it and to submit a scholarly research article for publication.

Educationally yours,

Jà Hon Vance

Jà Hon Vance



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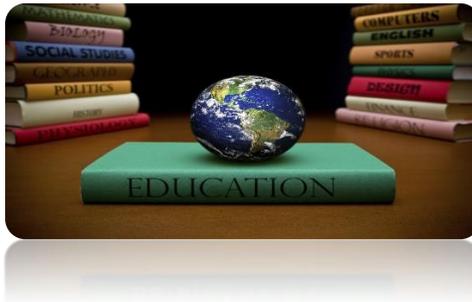
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Reflections on Educational Transformation



Author: Dr. Sherrell Hobbs

Educational transformation is an age-old term that many educators have become weary of today. When schools are failing, politicians come to the rescue to demand an immediate fix. If it were that easy, then students all across our nation would have a rate of proficiency that would of course reflect the hard work that their teachers labor every day to provide their students with. Adding to that, then the skills necessary to make the grade would also be evident in student performance outcomes. Instead, just the opposite seems to more often occur, thus frustrating everyone into a notion of calling for "educational transformation." When the evidence of educational transformation does not occur, then it is critical for us to think about lessons from the past as we advance into a new paradigm that will get the results necessary to prove that students can and do learn. Many educators will state that they have tried everything to support student achievement, but the question, however, remains--How do students really learn best?

As an educator, who does well, and is worth their salt, we have to first break down and define what the word "transformation" means in relationship to best educational practices. The prefix of transformation is "trans." Trans means, across, beyond, through and surpassing, or transcending. In educational practices, to go beyond, means to exceed the reference point. Adding the root word "form" to trans, adds to the contextual expectation, as it now means, to visually shape or configure something. Now, translating this process into how we are educating students, the process means to surpass the traditional expectations for how students have been educated in the past to now ensure that the student of today, would now have been extended the opportunity to learn through an innovative means that has the ability to present a high yield return on the investment of shifting to advanced strategies that promote the notion of high quality instruction as it relates to student learning and meeting achievement gains and goals.

What hinders this process from happening as it should—is the expectation that the curriculum must be changed. If this were true and all that is required, then dating back to when basic means of a curriculum only existed in a one room school house, the question is, if students learned in a one room school house, and a great majority would emerge to become notable leaders of the world, "what then, is hindering so many students from learning and excelling now?" The answer has to be more than transformation.

Educators believe that they are the experts in the educational arena, and as such, they must be allowed to put creativity and engagement back into the classroom. This is not done because it sounds good, but because it is good for students to experience a sense of belonging. Plus, as a part of the learning process, for students to produce the results that are expected on standardized tests, they must have their needs met first. Translated, we must return back to Maslow's hierarchy of human need--belonging. Students must feel like they belong in the classroom, not from a seat, desk and materials provision, but from an engagement process, where their voice is activated. When students really believe that they belong in the classroom, where their voice is heard and they are empowered through the educational process, and that the classroom cannot, and will not function well without their active participation, then and only then, will they produce results beyond everyone's expectations. If you do not believe that this is true, compare suburban education to urban education. In suburban education, you will find a student centered and focused classroom of intense learners that out perform urban students. Whereas in many low performing environments, the student is secondary and the teacher is primary as the proverbial talking head and the controller both in and of the classroom. The student melds into the desk and is only an object, just as all of the other objects in the classroom and they are not an active participant, thus they are inorganic.

In conclusion, it is not adding more resources to the classroom. It is not hanging more artifacts on the walls. It is not purchasing a new curriculum, and finally, it is not increasing the cost of educating the student. What is it? Human capital—an organic student where the teacher is building capacity in each student—releases them into a paradigm of student led learning, in turn, this ultimately yields true educational transformation.



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Literature Review

Latino First-generation Students: A Review of Cultural Background as it Relates to Academic Success and College Persistence

Author: Dr. Annie M. P. Jackson

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the academic and cultural background of Latino first-generation college students and persistence towards college graduation. Latino students are one of the largest growing populations; however, college access and success rates are low (Pyne & Means, 2013). There are two million Latino students, ages 18 to 20 enrolling in college, which is a large number compared to other minority groups (Fry & Lopez, 2012). As the Latino population continues to become the largest minority population, they are considered to be at-risk and underprepared for college, (Boden, 2011). Latino first-generation college students cannot rely on family members to assist with educational support, are less likely to be accepted to a 4-year college, are expected to work part-time, attend a 2-year college, and may not graduate from college (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). The educational attainment of Latinos has not kept up with the pace of the growing population. With this in mind, it was necessary to examine issues that support or deter academic competence and expectations of Latino students. In addition, addressing the persistent struggles and degree attainment of students may be instrumental in increasing college readiness. Educators working with Latino students may be challenged with understanding these issues.

Institution personnel may obtain knowledge from this study concerning obstacles Latino first-generation students encounter their first-year of college. The information presented may provide helpful guidelines on processing and developing academic support programs for Latino first-generation college students. Postsecondary institutions must develop strategies for retaining and motivating first-generation students to persist in pursuing a college degree (Petty, 2014).

The literature review assisted with obtaining knowledge and a deeper understanding of the cultural and academic challenges Latino first-generation students encounter during their first year of college. The review of literature included peer-reviewed articles related to the following topics, cultural and academic background, college preparation, college transition, parental and family support, and institutional support. The subtopics were directly related to the topics discussed.

Documentation

A literature review was conducted utilizing peer-reviewed articles, which discussed the academic persistence and cultural background of Latino first-generation college students. Several databases from the Northcentral library, including EBSCOHost, ERIC, and Roadrunner search was used for research purposes. Google Scholars resources were also used. The following keywords were utilized in the research: *first-generation college student, Latino college students, parental support, high school environment and completion, college transition, academic preparation, cultural background, challenges, race and ethnicity, family relationships and support, institutional support, college readiness, access, and persistence, cultural values and stressors.*

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This qualitative research study was guided by Tinto (2006) theory of academic and social integration, Greenfield (2009) social change and human development concept, and Lin (2001) social capital theory. Tinto's (2006) theory of academic and social integration was developed from his experience with 4-year institutions; however, a similar model can be used in a community college setting. According to Tinto (1994), 2-year colleges are aware of the need to increase the completion rates; however, all colleges should explore student involvement and attainment in order to adjust their learning environment. Latino first-generation college students may benefit from the strategies used in this theory. Tinto (2006) recommend that the education movements pursue methods of restructuring the education system and examine how students are being educated.

The goal of Greenfield (2009) social change and human development theory was to explain how sociodemographic condition changes relate to cultural values and developmental patterns, which is transformed across generations. The theory focused on collectivistic values that include education, family, and social life (Greenfield, 2009). Latinos value collectivistic principles because of their close family relationships. This theory may be used to understand why Latino first-generation students remain in college and why others leave. According to Greenfield (2009), the shift in developmental pathways is due to changes in the sociodemographic locations, cultural values, and developmental patterns of students.

According to Lin (2001), social capital is defined as an investment in social relations that result in marketplace returns. Social relationships developed in the community, with college personnel, political figures, and educational movements can increase networking strategies for Latino first-generation college students. The structure of the network is important in improving college access. It is important to use social connections and social relations to achieve goals (Lin, 2001). Colleges and universities can utilize the social capital theory in developing a network with Latino first-generation students. Understanding the cultural experiences of students may assist with implementing networking strategies.

Cultural Influences

The influences from cultural backgrounds may affect the success or failure rates of Latino first-generation college students. There are 19 countries in Latin America representing many diverse groups and cultures (Moreno & Gaytan, 2013). Culture is more important to individuals than social influences from others (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). Latino students exposed to diverse cultures may experience issues in their social life and adjustments to college. First-generation students who are unexposed to collegiate experiences tend to develop cultural shifts as they began postsecondary education and may become confused about the home and collegiate cultures. Students unable to survive the cultural shifts may become frustrated and drop out of college. Negative encounters and barriers that lead to Latino students disengaging from their educational process may cause increased dropout rates (Moreno & Gaytan, 2013). Nevertheless, according to Krogstad (2016), recently there has been a spike in college enrollment and a decrease in high school dropout rates.

Gloria and Castellanos (2012) examined educational experiences and coping strategies of Latino first-generation students on college campuses and determined that family is a critical factor in influencing students' college success. Latino families and college success are related to the following (a) family roles are fundamental and complex (b) emotional, physical, and social support (c) connection with family, and (d) the overall academic success and coping skills (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). Family connections are important to the Latino home environment structure. Latino first-generation college students feel obligated to assist with finances and are committed to supporting the family. Family obligations are related to challenges with student's enrollment and persistence in college (Vega, 2016). Challenges with separating family and college obligations may influence the dropout rates (Storlie, Mostade, & Duenyas, 2016). According to Blackwell and Pinder (2014), involving parents in college activities could provide the exposure needed for Latino first-generation students to survive in college.

According to Coffman (2011), the influence of human race and social class has an impact on students' college experiences. In addition, college personnel, family, friends, and teachers have significant influences on the success of first-generation students. The focus is directed to the areas of race, educational aspirations, choices, social class, academic preparation, social network, upward social mobility, and meaningful efforts. Cultural and social capital can affect the cognitive and psychosocial development of students. Academic acculturative stress is a challenge for first-generation students because of the cultural capital of academic skills and decreased education knowledge from parents (Jenkins et al., 2013).

The cultural capital theory emphasized that college-educated parents transmit skills, attitudes, and interests to children about the importance of engaging in college activities (Padgett et al., 2012). Cognitive and psychosocial outcomes were not beneficial to first-generation students. Good practices in cognitive and psychosocial results may change in magnitude and direction for first-generation and non-first-generation students.

Padgett et al. (2012) examined the projected nature of parental educational across an extensive range of outcomes. Students whose parents have experienced some higher educational background, even if they did not graduate, are more likely to score higher cognitive and psychosocial results when compared to non-first-generation students (Padgett et al., 2012). The

effects of vetted practices have a different impact on first-year outcomes for students whose parents have various levels of education (Padgett et al., 2012).

First-generation students struggle to separate college expectations from household requirements. As first-generation students earn the opportunity to attend college, they may experience guilt because they have surpassed the achievement of other family members. According to Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015), first-generation and minority students reported higher levels of guilt than continuing-generation and white students did. Families that experience fewer struggles will lead to a reduced amount of family achievement guilt (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). Family support and establishing connections with students in the same situation were both external influences; however, goal-oriented behavior was an internal motive based on the cognitive needs of the individual (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). Consequently, Corona, Rodriguez, McDonald, Velazquez, Rodriguez, and Fuentes (2017) believe that family and peer support can assist Latino first-generation with remaining academically motivated. First-generation and ethnic students report an increase in guilt when compared to continuing-generation and white students. In addition, first-generation students struggle more than continuing-generation students do. In the help condition group, first-generation students reported less guilt than first-generation students in the controlled group. Continuing-generation students did not report guilt in either condition.

Programs on college campuses must decrease marginalization because of race, strengthen preparation, and support networks for students. During the program development stages, it will be important to consider the desire of students to exceed their parents' economic status and locate successful jobs. According to Moreno and Gaytan (2013), developing a cultural understanding of Latino students can provide a critical foundation for developing and implementing programs that are sensitive to students' needs. A lack of cultural understanding may lead to misrepresentation of students. In addition, understanding college experiences and success rates of first-generation students will assist college personnel in developing successful strategies for improving programs offered to Latino students.

Academic Background and College Preparation

Despite the spike in the enrollment rates of Latino first-generation students enrolled in 4-year colleges, the dropout rates tend to be higher than any other ethnic group in the United States (Fry & Taylor, 2012; Santiago & Galdeano, 2014). The increase in dropout rates may be related to students' high school academic performance. First-generation students who are from low-income households represent 51% of public school students (Southern Education Foundations, 2015). Equally stated by Tucker (2014), first-generation students are from low-income families. Latinos from low-income households may struggle with obstacles that affect their educational experiences, in high school, thereby, causing issues with their success in college

High school academic background. The academic background of Latino first-generation students in high school may weigh in on students' performance in college. D'Amico and Dika (2013) suggested that information about previous performance is most significant in predicting student success. Latino students make up 1 in 4 public schools in the nation; however, students still perform behind most ethnic groups (Fry & Lopez, 2012). Academic performance may be related to student's demographic locations and K-12 experiences. High schools located in poor neighborhoods do not prepare students for college and are unable or unwilling to meet Latino first-

generation students' needs (Irizarry, 2012). Nearly 62% of Latino children live in or near poverty, are linguistically isolated, and have no postsecondary education, which affects their success in high school and college (Wildsmith, Alvira-Hammond, & Guzman, 2016). In a previous study by Addy and Wight (2012), it was noted that Latino student living in low-income homes tend to attend schools that are hyper-segregated and under-resourced. According to Orfield and Ee (2014), poverty and language barriers segregate Latinos from other student groups. Many Latino high school students are not academically prepared for college (Kim & Nuñez, 2013). According to Gonzalez (2012), Latino students lack academic preparation. Therefore; consequently, high school graduation rates continue to be stagnant (Murillo & Schall, 2016). On the contrary, from a study conducted in 2014, the high school dropout rate for Hispanics has declined and college enrollment has increased; however, the dropout rates remain higher than other ethnic groups (Krogstad, 2016).

Several authors have provided information to support reasons why students may not persist towards college (Cupito, Stein, & Gonzalez, 2015; Kim & Nuñez, 2013; Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015; Pong & Landale, 2012; Rodriguez, Rhodes, & Aguirre, 2015; Vega, 2016). Latinos perspectives on education may not be considered when examining their decision to attend and persist in college. The cultural attitudes towards college and employment play an important role in what is more significant and may lead students away from college enrollment (Rodriguez et al., 2015). Vega (2016) suggests that Latino first-generation students are from low socioeconomic backgrounds and do not have the social capital to support their educational efforts, which decreased academic success and college persistence. Therefore, Latino students from socioeconomic backgrounds underperform in school, and their path toward college graduation is lessened (Pong & Landale, 2012). Additionally, according to Martinez and Deil-Amen (2015), first-generation students from high socioeconomic schools share similar complications in academic performance when compared to students from low socioeconomic schools during their first year in college. The socioeconomic status of Latinos may be related to the income disparity received due to a lack of educational experience and living environment. According to Rodriguez et al. (2015), the income disparity and low college completion have not kept up with the growing Latino population. The decision to attend college or not may be dependent on the socioeconomic status of the family. Ultimately, financing college will affect where high school students will enroll in college (Kim & Nuñez, 2013). Conversely, parents with children who are likely to enroll in a 4-year college will finance the student regardless of their family income (Kim & Nuñez, 2013).

According to Cupito, Stein, and Gonzalez (2015), family cultural values play a vital role in the academic outcome of Latino students. Because the family opinions are valued, and the level of respect is high, most Latino children will honor the parents' wishes. However, if students value adults in schools as they do with their parents, they are more likely to have a positive experience in school (Cupito et al., 2015).

Learning environment. The academic background and preparation for college skills that Latino first-generation students receive in high school may help shape their success in college. When the learning environment is engaging and supportive, students are motivated to work harder and meet challenges more effectively (Hidden Curriculum, 2014). As information is discovered about previous academic performances of Latino first-generation students, the opportunity to predict students' success in college may be possible

Learning environment issues in high schools may alter the college preparation track of Latino first-generation students. High schools that are still struggling with relating to or offering courses to represent Latinos culture may not serve students well (Gandara & Mordechay, 2017). Latino students stress concerns about course offerings and the disconnection to their experiences and interest, which subsequently made them feel unprepared for college (Murillo & Schall, 2016). Courses that offer culturally relevant practices, including the ethnic studies curriculum and student support programs may help Latino students academically (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015). High school teachers and administration should support students from different ethnic backgrounds and encourage them to consider and prepare for college. By providing Latino first-generation students with the opportunity to take college readiness courses will assist with preparing for college. A lack of academic preparation may alter Latino students' interest in attending college. Previous research suggests communicating to students the need for success and the academic requirements needed to prepare for college and careers. The following were suggested (a) set rigorous expectations, (b) provide a list of graduation requirements, (c) encourage students to take advanced classes, (d) ensure that the required classes are offered within the time frame needed, (e) explain and discuss the expectations and skills needed for future success, (f) provide students with a progress report to determine if they are on track (g) provide information on real life-learning outside of the classroom, (h) provide services (tutoring) for students, and (i) make sure that students understand the benefits of academic preparation (Achieve, 2014). These guidelines may ensure that students are prepared and ready for their next steps, which is college. How Latino first-generation students assess their readiness and persistence toward college may be worthy of further investigation.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), fewer than 8% of teachers in high schools are bilingual and able to communicate with students and parents. There is a shortage of teachers in the country, specifically bilingual teachers available to assist Latino students (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Consequently, Latino students that can communicate with teachers by speaking the same language as their parents will feel comfortable in the classroom environment (Gandara et al., 2013). In most Latinos home, the spoken language is Spanish; therefore, parents are not able to communicate in English (Murillo & Schall, 2016). An increase in Latino teachers available to young Latinos, the likelihood that they will enroll in college will increase (NCES, 2013). Moreno and Gaytan (2013) believed that it is critical that educators, current, and future, is knowledgeable enough to work with students regardless of their ethnic background. A higher student to teacher ratio will have negative effects on student's preparation for college (Kim & Nuñez, 2013). According to Irizarry (2012), increasing the presence of Latino educators may improve the educational experiences and outcomes of students; thereby, increasing the future pool of Latino teachers. Smaller classroom sizes will provide the opportunity to focus on the needs of Latino first-generation college students.

Latinos tend to receive lower grade-point averages (GPA), have lower scores on standardized tests, and the enrollment in advanced courses is low (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). First-generation students do not have access or resources to connect to college prep courses; therefore, they do not prepare for the SAT examination or enroll in advance placement courses. Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT) tests are required for most prominent universities (Rodriguez, Rhodes, & Aguirre, 2015). Family responsibilities and obligations, poor study skills, and weak English and mathematics skills are detrimental to students' success in college (Stebleton & Soria, 2014). First-generation college students with high verbal and math

self-concept scores will possibly have higher academic achievement, while little confidence in ones' academic abilities is related to lower academic performance (DeFreitas & Rinn, 2013). Latino students have lower reading and math scores when compared to other students (Gonzalez, 2012). The quality of the high school curriculum matters. Consequently, first-generation students are less likely to be prepared for college when compared to non-Latino (DeFreitas & Rinn, 2013). According to Rodriguez et al. (2015), Latino students who took rigorous remedial courses were academically prepared for college. Furthermore, high-achieving students are more likely to be successful in college (IES, 2012).

Latino students may not receive encouragement from high school administrators. The influence of teachers can be important to students' success in high school. Those students who drop out of high school may do so because of low expectations from school administrators and a commitment to supporting students in their post-secondary education paths (Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015). According to Rodriguez et al. (2015), some students were misled to believe that they will not graduate from high school or that obtaining a GED would be better for them. Directions from high school personnel about college preparation courses as well as information concerning college enrollment processes are important to Latino first-generation students. Counselors and teachers are highly influential in Latino student's decision to transition to college (Pino, Martinex-Ramos, & Smith, 2012). Uneducated parents may not provide support students need to prepare for college; therefore, without the support of guidance counselors in high school, Latino students may suffer in college. Latinos enrollment in college would increase if access to guidance were possible (Rodriguez et al., 2015).

High school Latino students face a multitude of obstacles related to English language and learning disabilities. According to Trainor, Murray, & Hye-June (2016), English language barriers may be associated with student's learning disabilities. Latino students with English language difficulties and learning disabilities have been disproportionately placed in special education (Trainor et al., 2016). Latino students are labeled as special education students and do not perform well academically (Becerra, 2012). English learner and students with disabilities encounter similar barriers in high school as well as outside of high school. A lack of cultural understanding is the reason for the performance gap the nation is experiencing (Becerra, 2012). According to Kena et al. (2014), approximately 7% of the U.S. students drop out of high school before receiving a diploma and the dropout rate for immigrants is 16% higher. There is a lack of information available related to high school completion, and successful postsecondary education of Latino students with English language deficiency (Trainor et al., 2016). Latino students interested in attending postsecondary institutions should be informed of the linguistic requirements before enrolling in higher education institutions. Parents should advocate for students transitioning from high school to college. However, according to Trainor et al. (2016), little is known about the parental support disabled children receive in their endeavor to attend college.

Family obligations. Latino first-generation students receive support from family members who value education. Family support and obligations are important to the success of students' educational goals. Family obligations are related to a sense of duty to support, respect, and provide support for family members when needed (Milan & Wortel, 2015). Working family members may rely on older siblings to care for younger siblings while they are working. Teenage children are expected to contribute financially to the household, thereby, must work while attending college

(Rodriguez et al., 2015). Because of the family value and obligation concept, Latino first-generation students may fall behind in schoolwork; therefore, their grades will suffer. According to Cupito et al. (2015), family obligation and cultural values have an extreme effect on how well Latino students perform in high school. High levels of family obligations may have negative effects on choices between academics and family responsibilities. Latino students may neglect completing homework because of family obligation requirements. According to Telzer, Fuligni, Lieberman, and Galvan (2013), family obligations have been linked to positive family functioning; however, a strong sense of family obligation may create stress for children, Milan and Wortel, (2015) and become a double-edged sword in terms of influence on achievement (Witkow, Huynh, & Fuligni, 2015). Most importantly, this experience may contribute to students dropping out of high school that reduces their persistence to attend college.

Some Latino first-generation students may live in single-parent homes, where the mother or father is absent. Separation of the family may be related to death, spousal separation or divorce, or the parent did not migrate to the United States. Issues with the home structure may interfere with students learning and coping skills needed to focus in school. Families may choose to migrate to the United States because of economic opportunities, relief from political persecution, or violence (Wright & Levitt, 2014). However, according to Gonzalez (2012), immigrant status does not explain the educational choices of Latinos. Upon entering the United States, Latino may encounter adjustment issues. In a school system where there is little understanding of Latinos cultural background, this issue can become problematic for students who do not receive support from schoolteachers or administrators.

College Transition

Although Latino first-generation students are enrolling in college in record numbers, there continue to be a gap in bachelor's degree obtainment when compared to other ethnic groups (Pew Research Center, 2016). Only 15% of Latinos ages 25-29 have a bachelor's degree or higher when compared to 22% African American, 41% whites, and 63% Asians (Pew Research Center, 2016). In 2011, an increasing number of bachelor's degrees were granted to Latinos; however, they still trail behind the number of 4-year degrees conferred (Fry & Lopez, 2013). According to Gandara and Mordechay (2017), only 17% of Latinos have completed a bachelor's degree in 2015. Latinos are enrolling in 2-year colleges at a higher rate than 4-year colleges (Gonzalez, 2012). Because many Latino students lack academic preparation, they are inclined to attend community colleges (Gonzalez, 2012). Community colleges educate more than half of the nation's undergraduates, which consist of low-income, first-generation students, students of color and immigrants (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015). Notably, only 20% of Latinos have earned an Associate Degree or higher compared to 36% of other ethnic groups (Santiago & Galdeano, 2014).

Approximately 70% of students enrolled in colleges are first-generation college students (Murillo & Schall, 2016). Latino first-generation college students may decide to enroll in college to honor the family or for financial reasons; however, they arrive on campus with an array of issues. Students are searching for belonging and possess doubts and ambivalence that suggest that they are neither welcome nor ready for a college education or that they are imposters in this world (Payne & Means, 2013). A sense of belonging can be critical to the mental health of first-generation college students (Wheeler, 2016). Latino first-generation students may have difficulties

with separation anxiety if they are attending college away from home. The anxiety may be a result of students losing their safety net and protective benefits the family provides. The transition process can cause stress for first-generation students because they may be fearful of the results but understand the need for a college education.

During the transition period from high school to college, Latino first-generation students may experience changes in educational motivation, a concern for educators (Prospero, Russell, & Vohra-Gupta, 2012). A lack of motivation can become an academic issue. Motivation can develop from external, internal or both areas (Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014). Postsecondary institutions must develop successful strategies to motivate first-generation college students to persist toward graduation (Petty, 2014).

Several motivation theories may be used as a theoretical approach to understanding why some Latinos persist while others do not. Motivating students may help with persistence. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory is designed as a pyramid and states that the lower levels must be satisfied before continuing to the higher levels (Petty, 2014). There five levels included in Maslow's theory (a) Physiological needs consist of basic needs required for daily survival, such air, food, water, and shelter, (b) Safety needs are related to feeling protected against danger and harm, (c) Social needs consist of feeling loved and the ability to fit in, (d) Esteem needs include having the ability to feel confident and self-respected, and (e) Self-actualization needs consist of the realization of one's potentials (Petty, 2014). McClelland's Need for Achievement theory focuses on increased levels of self-esteem (Petty, 2014). McClelland believed that humans fall into two categories (a) individuals who encounter challenges and have developed the mindset to overcome those challenges to become successful, and (b) individuals who are not concerned with challenges nor do they try to overcome challenges (Petty, 2014). Both, the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and McClelland's Need for Achievement theories focus on human needs.

The status of the college environment will be important to students as they transition to college. During the transition stage, the student's environment will change as well as the people they meet; therefore, it will be helpful to assist students with adjusting to college. Faculty, staff, and peers can assist students with connecting to the campus environment, which will increase their academic success (Baker, 2013). The social support from others may be beneficial to the academic and personal success of Latino students. According to Tinto's theory, social support from the environment is important (Baker, 2013).

Obstacles encountered. Challenges Latino first-generation students experience during the post-secondary education can interfere with their persistence toward a degree and eventually graduation. Stebleton and Soria (2012) stated that first-generation students experience a higher level of obstacles when compared to non-first-generation students. Latino students may find the transition from high school to college a difficult task. Obstacles Latino first-generation students encounter during this time may influence their decision to leave college may be related to the following areas (a) exposure to diverse cultures, (b) language barriers, (c) course remediation, (d) discrimination, and (e) financial challenge. First, the exposure of diverse cultures may influence the social life of Latino first-generation college students. Diverse students speak different languages, are from various countries of origin and socioeconomic status. As students become aware of the diverse population and interact with other ethnic groups, cross-cultural conflicts may

exist. Cross-cultural conflict arises when different cultural values collide (Borges-Cienfuegos, Vasquez-Salgado, Ruedas-Garcia, & Greenfield, 2015). Students may feel that they are living in two cultures. Consequently, Moreno and Gaytan (2013) stated that Latinos living in two cultures struggle to succeed in college. In a similar matter, Latino first-generation college students feel caught in between two cultures and find it difficult to reconcile both expectations (Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins, & Serrata, 2016). Exposure to various cultural values could have a negative or positive impact on student's success in college. Understanding the culture and values of Latino students is essential in the expanding career development and serving the needs of students on the college campus (Fry & Lopez, 2012). As students enter college with excitement and enthusiasm for learning, they may develop a sense of mistrust and disassociate from their peers. Isolation from their peers may cause students to leave college before graduating.

Second, language barriers may be an obstacle for Latino students transitioning to college. In a country where English is the primary language, this may be an adjustment for Latino students who do not understand this language. Students who have difficulties with the English language develop issues with academic success (Wright & Levitt, 2014). Because of the language barriers, communication with faculty and staff may become a hardship for Latino first-generation college students. Latinos that are unable to speak English and communicate effectively with college personnel may be stereotyped and misidentified as disabled (Moreno & Gaytan, 2013). A lack of proper assessment and cultural understanding contributes to bias by educators, which has negative effects on the Latinos success in college (Moreno & Gaytan, 2013). Institutional personnel may consider providing a language translator to assist Latino families with understanding English, which may provide relief for family members who are frustrated because they cannot effectively communicate.

Third, many students enrolling in college may need remedial courses. According to Rodriguez et al. (2015), Latinos need higher levels of remedial courses than other ethnic groups. Remediation is described as any course taken on a college campus that is lower than a college-level course (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017). Remedial courses consist of reading, writing, and math of which placement tests are used to determine course assignments. Latino (41%) and low-income students are more likely to take developmental courses when compared to White or wealthy students (Bautsch, 2013). Remedial course requirements may prolong Latino student's college stay and become financially challenging for students and their families.

Fourth, as Latino first-generation students arrive on college campuses, they try to make adjustments to fit in with their peers; however, the cultural shock experiences can become overwhelming. Based on these experiences, Latino students may perceive this treatment to be discrimination. Discrimination from peers may affect students' persistence and motivation to succeed (Witkow et al., 2015). Discrimination actions may lead to social and academic issues and eventually persistence concerns (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2013). According to the ASHE Higher Education Report (2013), Latino students suffer from a stigma because it may be assumed that they are admitted to college because of affirmative action racial preference and not because of academic qualifications. It may be important to examine the campus climate for changes in how students, especially students from various ethnic backgrounds, adjust. An unwelcoming campus climate with a multitude of social challenges can result in issues with Latino student

success (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2013). Students must overcome their feelings of intimidation in order to survive the college environment.

Lastly, financial challenges may occur for families inexperienced with processes and options available to pay for college. As the prices to attend college continue to escalate, Latino families struggle to find the means to support children's excitement about college. Financial burdens on families can be associated with Latino first-generation students finding employment to fill the financial gap to help support the family, whereby, causing students to have a lack of determination (Witkow et al., 2015). Family circumstances may play a role in students' decisions to remain in college or to drop out. Latino students are more concerned with the financial impact on family resources instead of focusing on long-term payoff of college (Nuñez & Kim, 2012). Poverty is a risk factor that may hinder Latino first-generation students' academic success in college (Moreno & Gaytan, 2013). According to Moreno and Gaytan (2013), 27% of Latino children live in poverty in the United States. Because of the Latino poverty status, many students shy away from applying for scholarships, instead they work to make ends meet (Gandara & Mordechay, 2017). Because of Latino family socioeconomic disadvantages, the cost of college may be unaffordable.

Latino first-generation college students receive emotional support and encouragement from family members; however, advice and mentoring support with college homework are lacking (Tucker, 2014). According to Tate et al. (2015), underrepresented first-generation college students are ill prepared for accomplishing higher levels of education, which may create a problem of inequality when pursuing educational goals. On the other hand, Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins, and Serrata (2016) stated that students are ill equipped for college because of the lack of knowledge about the expectations of college.

Access. Latino first-generation student's access to college may be influenced by their social capital status, as well as their individual characteristics. The type and size of a college may bear emphasis on how Latino students select their choice of colleges and universities (Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015). Access to educational resources are limited for Latino students and has become an educational hardship (Moreno & Gaytan, 2013). Associating Latino first-generation college students with a specific class or group may affect the type of resources that are available (Kim & Nuñez, 2013). However, a lack of access to resources and information can become barriers for Latino students (Carolan-Silva & Reyes, 2013). Access to resources may depend on the initiatives pursued by students and family member but will likely rely on the parent's educational background (Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015). Because Latino parents are unfamiliar with the United States educational system, they miss opportunities to receive resources available for students (Witkow, Huynh, & Fuligni, 2015). Similarly, according to Carolan-Silva and Reyes (2013), Latino first-generation college students face challenges as they attempt to navigate a path that is unfamiliar to them and their parents. Oddly enough, Latino first-generation college students may be able to utilize their social capital status to obtain resources and information concerning college access.

The individual characteristics of Latino first-generation college students may hinder or support the level in which access is available. Latino students not willing to make an effort to connect with college personnel or have difficulties obtaining information from families and peers who do not have college experience may encounter barriers (Carolan-Silva & Reyes, 2013). According to Carolan-Silva and Reyes (2013), social capital networking can be the support needed to overcome

hurdles of limited or unreachable access. Latino students must develop strong relationships with families, the community, and school personnel to access various types of resources, which may be critical to understanding the educational inequalities that deter college access for students (Carolan-Silva & Reyes, 2013). Institutional support for college access should be emphasized to college personnel, specifically the counselor who works closely with Latino first-generation college students. Ironically, as stated by Carolan-Silva and Reyes (2013), a lack of sufficient and appropriate institutional support continues to be an issue for many Latino first-generation college students. Simply stated, Pstross, Rodriguez, Knopf, and Paris (2016) “students are not being prepared to handle the competitive challenges of a global economy” (p. 651). Colleges and universities should ensure that Latino first-generation students receive adequate resources and information needed to assist in achieving their academic goals. As stated by, Longwell-Grice et al. (2016), students who see evidence that they are valued by the university are more likely to be motivated.

Parental and Family Support

Family unity or *familismo* is a key characteristic among Latinos (Rios-Ellis et al., 2015). Because family is important to the Latino culture, the role of family is vital in Latino students’ college experiences (ASH Higher Education Report, 2013). Parents of Latino first-generation college students may want the best education for their children, but because of life circumstances, they may not be able to support their children’s educational objectives. Agreeably, Kim and Nuñez (2013) believe that underrepresented ethnic groups have high educational expectations for their children; however, fewer resources are available to accomplish those expectations. Gandara and Mordechay (2017) stated that Latino parents support education. Positive parental support for students in high school as well as college may provide the qualifications required for students to be successful. A strong family relationship, positive home environment, and persistence have a positive influence on their academic achievement (Prospero, Russell, & Vohra-Gupta, 2012). According to Pstross et al. (2016), parents have a desire to help their children. Kouyoumdjian, Guzman, Garcia, and Talavera-Bustillos (2017) believe that the county where Latino parents receive their education is important in determining how they support their children. To understand why some parents are supportive and others are not supportive of children enrolling in college, a review of their experiences, and educational background may be helpful. On the contrary, according to Blackwell and Pinder (2014), while Latino students receive support from their parents, they are not encouraged to attend college. Latino parents’ sense of family and community is tied to their cultural background and lived experiences (Martinez, Cortez, & Saenz, 2013). The cultural background of parents may influence their perceptions about college, while the sacrifices made by Latino families may help toward their aspiration about college.

Parents, who work low-paying jobs, may not understand the importance of a college education. According to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), Latinos represent a substantial percentage of unskilled labor force jobs. Because of parents work experiences they may not understand the importance of a college education in today’s economy. Education is critical to the success of the labor market (Pong & Landale, 2012). In comparison, Taylor, Fry, and Oates (2014) stated that education is more critical than ever for employment and income purposes. The resources received before they arrive in the U.S. as immigrants influence their career destination (Pong & Landale, 2012). Most immigrants travel to this country for economic growth (Pong & Landale, 2012).

According to Wright and Levitt (2014), Latinos may choose to migrate to the U. S. because of possible economic opportunity and political and violence issues. The resource information received by parents before and after migration to the U.S. is important to the children's academic achievement (Pong & Landale, 2012). The knowledge about education in their previous country may not be similar to or be comparable to the way of life in the U. S.; therefore, parents may stray away from education conversations (Pong & Landale, 2012). Parents' experiences help shape their behavior (Dondero & Humphries, 2016). On the contrary, immigrant status does not provide clarification for the educational choices made by Latinos (Gonzalez, 2012). Immigrants are not familiar with the education system in the United States and may not be aware of options available to support their children (Kouyoumdjian, Guzman, Garcia, & Talavera-Bustillos, 2017).

Limited educational experience and knowledge. Latino first-generation college students are more likely to have parents who do not have a college degree and have limited experience and knowledge about college. Many Latino parents have limited knowledge about the school environment (Pstross et al., 2016). The knowledge received may be obtained from family members attending or have attended college. However, the information received will help parents gain a better understanding of college requirements. Parental education has an effect on college enrollment (Kim & Nuñez, 2013). The family network commitment may influence Latino student's decision to attend college (Carolan-Silva & Reyes, 2013). Most Latino parents do not understand the advantages of a college degree because they focus on short-term benefits rather than understanding long-term benefits (Rodriguez et al., 2015). Graduating from college may be considered the long-term benefit for students.

While Latino parents have the best interest of their children at hand, they may become frustrated with trying to understand the American education system. Parents may experience inequalities, which relate to feelings of frustration. According to Pstross et al. (2016), many families of Latino first-generation college students lack a sense of adaptation within the United States. Parents may feel that they are not connected to the college personnel, which may lead to a sense of isolation. Families are interested in assisting their children; however, with limited communication with schools, it may not become possible. Parents have high expectations for their children receiving a college education. It is of utmost importance for colleges and universities to consider the relationship if any, that they have established with the parents of Latino first-generation college students (Martinez et al., 2013). To strengthen the relationships already establish or develop new relationships with parents may improve the success of Latino first-generation college students. According to Martinez et al. (2013), parents want to be educated on college access so they can help their children. Martinez et al. (2013) stressed the concerns of an uneducated parent in his research who was asked by college personnel to help his child to apply for financial aid. The following questions were asked by the parents, "How do I know how to do this? Where do I get the information?" (Martinez et al., 2013, p.118). Empowering Latino parents with knowledge and skills to assist their children may have an impact on their pathway to success. It may be helpful for colleges and universities to include uneducated parents in information sessions concerning college and ensure that all students have access to college.

Language difficulties. According to Pew Research Center's National Survey of Latinos, approximately 62% of adult Hispanic speak English or are bilingual (Krogstad & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2015). By 2020, the number of Hispanics speaking English in their homes will decrease

by 73% to 66% (Krogstad & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2015). English language proficiency is an issue that affects Latino first-generation college students' academic achievement (Pong & Landale, 2012). Agreeably, Wright and Levitt (2013) stated that difficulties with the English language are an issue for Latinos, which is problematic to academic success. Parents who suffer from English deficiencies may not contribute to academic achievement, which causes Latino children to have difficulties in school (Pong & Landale, 2012). On the contrary, according to Pong and Landale (2012), many parents proficient in English and familiar with the American culture have fewer complications with adjusting to the U. S. society, and neither does the Latino children. There is controversy concerning the position of language in the U.S. according to a survey from the Pew Research, 87% of the people surveyed stated that Latino immigrants need to learn English to be successful, while 95% stated that it was essential for the future generations of Hispanics to speak Spanish (Krogstad & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2015). Some Latino families are bilingual, which assist with their ability to build social and communication skills (Rios-Ellis et al., 2015). Building communication skills with college personnel are especially important for understanding their parental role in the educational process of their children. Social skills are important in understanding their parental role in becoming involved in college activities.

College involvement. Parents of Latino first-generation college students may benefit from becoming involved in college programs and activities. The benefit to parents would be to obtain a better understanding of college expectations of students. When parents develop an understanding of the college environment and expectations, they become better equipped to help Latino first-generation students with college-related concerns. According to Kim and Nuñez (2013), parents who participate in college activities are more informed and will encourage their children to pursue a college degree. Agreeably, families who participate in college activities will assist first-generation students with the tools necessary to survive in college (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014).

Foreign-born parents are less likely to become involved in college-based activities than non-foreign born (Dondero & Humphries, 2016). Parents that are not involved in student's college endeavors may be related to their unfamiliarity with the college preparation processes and issues with understanding the English language. To gain access to information regarding college process, it will be important for parents to develop a relationship with college personnel and vice versa. A relationship established with college personnel will also benefit Latino first-generation college students; thereby, creating a welcoming environment for everyone. Encouraging families to become involved in college-based programs such as social events on campus as well as assisting in program development may increase family involvement. For example, a test-taking workshop is offered on campus for all ethnic groups after normal hours; however, Latino students may not attend because of other family obligations, such as transportation, childcare, and employment. If college personnel access the attendance record to determine which groups were not in attendance, the next workshop should be offered during normal hours to target the Latino population. Well-designed programs inclusive of parents, teachers, and Latino children may benefit everyone involved. College and university personnel can encourage Latino parents to become involved in campus activities by offering assistance with childcare, transportation, food, speech translation, and offering culturally based programs. To determine the needs of the Latino populations, a survey presented to families to determine the needs necessary in their community to support student success may be helpful to the college. The information gathered from the surveys can assist with

developing plans for encouraging Latino families to participate in college activities on campus and in their community.

Institutional Support

The role that institutions play in the academic success of Latinos is critical (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2013). Highlighted in this study are suggestions on improving services offered to Latino first-generation students in higher education institutions. The general environment of colleges and universities are focused on academic preparation and remediation but fail to recognize the potential of this culturally diverse group of Latino first-generation students (Rios-Ellis et al., 2015). Because Latino first-generation students rely on educational institutions for a college education, it is important that the necessary tools to do so are provided. However, many colleges and universities lack the necessary support for students to succeed in college (Carolan-Silva & Reyes, 2013). Institutions must support all students regardless of their ethnic background if the goal is to increase graduation rates. Institutions can support Latino first-generation college students in their education efforts by doing the following (a) include students in setting goals that are meaningful and culturally relevant to them based on their demographic background, (b) utilize the support from parents and professors to help sustain their efforts, and (c) assist students with selecting courses that are reflective of their abilities and interests. Faculty can serve as a guide, but Latino students will make the course decisions. This process will help with confidence and challenges by assuring struggling students that their situations are not unique. Students can be paired with peer students to develop coping strategies by (a) utilizing students cognitive and emotional abilities as strengths to build meaningful learning, (b) incorporating project-based learning where students are placed in groups to develop strategies and skills for learning, (c) infusing and reinforcing reading, writing, and note-taking in all courses, (d) using office hours as opportunities to conversant with students about individual or project concerns, (e) requiring students to attend success-orientations seminars where they can receive support for academic learning, and (f) organizing social events that will bring various ethnic groups together. Social integration is important for retaining students and can be obtained by (a) reconstructing programs as needed and analyze how students are performing, (b) tailoring programs to help at-risk students, and (c) utilizing successful programs in other areas of the institution (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2016). Implementing these steps may promote a positive learning and teaching culture.

Because of the increasing enrollment of Latino first-generation students, colleges and universities must review policies and procedures affecting the academic success of first-generation college students. Those policies and procedures that consider ethnicity as their main focus will eventually fail (Hallet & Venegas, 2015). According to the Pew Research Center, there were 2.3 million Hispanic students enrolled in college in 2014 (Krogstad, 2016). By 2050, the population of Latinos in the U. S. is expected to triple (Pino, Martinez-Ramos, & Smith, 2012), which means that colleges must prepare to receive those students; however, with new immigration regulations on the books that number may change. It is important that staff, faculty, and administrators understand the needs of low socioeconomic first-generation college students, which will aid in improving retention and graduation efforts (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015).

During the transition stage, Latino first-generation students may decide to stay or leave college based on the atmosphere of the college. Their decision to attend college is centered on the

availability of information and how it fits within their understanding of the world (Hallett & Venegas, 2015). Agreeably, according to Carolan-Silva and Reyes (2013), Latino's selections for college attendance is dependent upon the best match for their academic, social, and personal interest. Likely so, strong family ties influence decisions about where or if Latino student will attend college (Carolan-Silva & Reyes, 2013). Latino student needs to feel wanted and comfortable knowing that the support of college personnel will be available when needed.

As the Latino population continues to grow, they are not restricted to urban locations but expanding to suburban and rural areas (Moreno & Gaytan, 2013). Latino first-generation students may decide to attend a community college or four-year college based on their socioeconomic status and geographic location. According to Ogunwole, Drewery, and Rios-Vargas (2012), only 13% of Latinos earn a bachelor's degree by age 29; however, high-income students are four times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree. The institution type, 2-year or 4-year, may influence the success of students and should be carefully reviewed by college personnel (Vega, 2016).

Resources. Latino first-generation students may enter college unsure about the education process and the availability of resources needed to become successful students. With this uncertainty, college personnel should inform students of options and resources available for assistance as soon as possible. It is critical for college and universities to assess educational resources offered to Latino first-generation college students (Moreno & Gaytan, 2013). Information shared with students the first week of classes may assist with strengthening the knowledge and understanding of what is expected and where to locate resources. Moschetti and Hudley (2015) agreed that engaging students immediately upon entry to college would enhance the likelihood of their academic process and positive social integration. Access to resources early in the student's freshmen year of college will help bridge the gap in academic expectations (Pino, Martinez-Ramos & Smith, 2012). According to Stephens, Hamedani, and Destin (2014) stated in his research that first-generation college students who took advantage of available resources demonstrated by higher academic performance when compared to first-generation students who did not take advantage of the resources. The transmission of resources such as personal counselors and advisors can serve as a source of social capital for Latino first-generation college students upon entry to college (Mochitti & Hudley, 2015). Many Latino first-generation college students lack social capital (Mochitti & Hudley, 2015). Social capital can be created through networking with institution agents about personal and academic decisions.

Programs and services offered to Latino first-generation college students may be utilized as encouragement strategies to assist with persistence toward graduation. A range of programs should be offered to help students overcome challenges and weaknesses (Petty, 2014). According to Kouyoumdjian et al. (2017), programs offered to Latino student are critical to increasing graduation rates. Of late, the existing programs do not center their offerings on Latino educational and cultural experiences, which affect how universities engage students in the services (Rios-Ellis et al., 2015). It is clear that current programs offered are not enough to support Latino students and meet the needs of a growing population (Rodriguez, Rhodes, & Aguirre, 2015). College and university personnel do not value the cultural strengths of Latino students as important to their academic success. Institution personnel must become culturally competent in their program offerings to help students transition to the next level, which is graduation. Developing resources and access to various programs may continue to become issues as long as college personnel remain

uneducated about the cultural background of Latino first-generation college students. According to Moreno and Gaytan (2013), programs should be tailored to Latino student's strengths, thus delivering and planning culturally sensitive instructions. Concurrently, Rios-Ellis et al. (2015) stated that during the stages of academic program development, the focus should be placed on the strengths of Latino first-generation college students, which are seldom valued by colleges and universities. It may also be helpful for college personnel to understand the diversity of Latino populations so that programs are tailored to their differences. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, many Latinos do not identify with either Latino or Hispanic because they represent many cultures (Moreno & Gaytan, 2013). Latinos may choose to be identified from their countries of origin such as Mexican or Cuban as well as the different cultures (Taylor, Lopez, Martinez, & Velasco, 2012).

Academic advising. Academic advisors may be instrumental in assisting Latino first-generation college students with college requirements. According to Swecker, Fifolt, and Searby (2013), academic advising is an approach necessary to retain Latino first-generation college students. Kouyoumdjian et al. (2017) agreed that academic advisors could help Latino students with the academic process, which may assist with improving the college completion rates. Longwell-Grice et al. (2016) also support the statement that academic advisors serve as a guide to assist Latino students through the transitional stages and on to graduation. Swecker, Fifolt, and Searby (2013) believe that the number of advising meeting with first-generation students is related to student persistence.

A lack of cultural understanding and underprepared college personnel can contribute to early dropout rates of Latino students (Moreno & Gaytan, 2013). Cultural values influence how students develop relationships, the kind of relationships students pursue, and how the relationships are utilized to gain access to resources (Carolan-Silva & Reyes, 2013). Advisors should take the opportunity to engage in conversations with Latino first-generation students to become familiar with their cultural background and academic needs. It is recommended that institutions support and emphasize the advising concept by increasing the number of advisors available to meet with students, format a group of advisors dedicated to work with students, implement proactive advising which shifts the responsibility, (intentional contact), to the advisor to contact students, and support and encourage professional development and training (Swecker, Fifolt, & Searby, 2013). Intentional contact is another name used for intrusive advising. Intrusive advising is a model that requires consistent contact by advisors with first-generation college students. Because the intrusive advising model is a strategy to promote a relationship between faculty and advisors, Longwell-Grice et al. (2016) believe it to be the most appropriate system for advisors assisting first-generation college students. Longwell-Grice et al. (2016) also recommend supporting academic advisors with professional development opportunities.

Peer mentoring program. Peer students may help provide support to Latino students. According to Espinoza (2013), peers in similar age groups with comparable educational objectives may assist Latino students. Establishing a peer-mentoring program may have a positive effect on the academic success of the student (Prospero et al., 2012). Advantages of offering peer-mentoring programs to Latino students include the following (a) opportunities to seek assistance beyond the classroom, (b) participation in culturally designed programs will be available, (c) personal relationships will be established, (d) immediate assistance will be available to discuss academic success opportunities, (e) high-achieving peers will be able to share their experiences, and (f) strategies necessary to overcome barriers will be obtained (Rios-Ellis et al., 2015). According to

Baker (2013), peer-mentoring programs do not improve the academic success of Latino students. Latino students may enter mentoring programs to become educated about important academic and resources available. On the contrary, Latino students' academic background challenges make it difficult to locate students interested or qualify because of their unfamiliarity with college (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2013). Traditional strategies for assisting Latino students may not be enough to help current students.

Faculty. The interaction between Latino first-generation college students and faculty members will set the tone for academic success. First-generation college students are less likely to interact with when compared to non-first-generation college students (Hutchinson, 2017). The frequency and quality of interactions have a positive effect on Latino students' grade point average (GPA), which resulted in higher retention rates (Tovar, 2015). Interactions with faculty are important for improving the academic achievement of Latino college students (Baker, 2013). According to Glass, Gesing, Hales, and Cong (2017), interactions with faculty and students outside of the classroom may affect students learning and development processes (Wirt & Jaeger, 2014). It is important for faculty to communicate with students both in and out of the classroom (Soria & Stebleton, 2012). Latino students may not understand the importance of meeting with faculty outside the classroom to discuss issues or concerns. According to Wang (2013), first-generation college students recognize the benefits of interacting with faculty. A faculty-mentoring program, which actively includes students, may increase student's self-efficacy and academic goals (Baker, 2013). Actively engaging in the classroom can affect academic and intellectual development outcomes (Soria & Stebleton, 2012). It is important that faculty create classrooms that engage in cultural variations, support students, and present issues from a different cultural perspective (Glass et al., 2017). A negative encounter between faculty and first-generation students may determine if the student leaves or remain in college (Glass et al., 2017). Departure from college may occur because Latino student's lack social capital experiences (Soria & Stebleton, 2012). Baker (2013) suggested that faculty of color may be important to Latino students; however, little research has examined the influence of the increase in academic performances of students.

Academic advisors should advocate for students to be placed in courses where faculty involves students in cultural variation activities (Gomez, Urzua, & Glass, 2014). Faculty should explore strategies to enhance engagement in and out of the classroom with Latino first-generation college students. One way to seek assistance is to attend professional development training which faculty would be able to strategize and understand the cultural background of Latino students. The information obtained can be infused in classroom presentations to students.

Summary

While exploring the challenge that Latino first-generation college students experience, there is a multitude of issues concerning higher education institutions. Latinos are the largest population in the United States and still growing, but lag behind other ethnic groups in relation to academic success. By 2050, the population of Latinos in the U. S. is expected to triple (Pino et al., 2012). From the beginning of adolescent, young adult to adulthood the cultural and educational background of Latinos, shape how they progress through the educational process. The geographic location and economic status may predict the type of school students attend. Latino first-generation college students living in poverty may attend schools that lack resources and educated teachers;

therefore, students miss the opportunity to take college prep courses and receive help with the transition process. The transition from high school to college can be stressful for Latino first-generation students because of the lack of support received from high school personnel. The educator's attitude toward the Latino population may determine whether students attend college or not.

The cultural background of Latino first-generation college students and family opinions determine the education paths students will follow. The family is considered important to the Latino culture. Difficulties with family obligations interfere with completing homework and study time, which affects students' academic success. While Latino parents support their children, they may not understand the importance of obtaining a college degree and the importance of education in today's economy. Uneducated Latino parents do not have the educational background or knowledge to assist students with college requirements; therefore, students are not motivated to persist toward graduation. According to Kouyoumdjian et al. (2017), where parents receive their education will determine how they support their children. Parents who complete their education in the United States can relate to the education system whereas, immigrants have to adjust to the education system. Colleges and universities can assist Latino parents and first-generation students with becoming knowledgeable about college by offering orientation and information sessions to include parents and Latino students.

Access to college and resources are limited to Latino first-generation college students. Because of low grades and access to college prep courses many Latino students experience ethnic disparity and discrimination. Access to available resources is connected to the social capital status. Latino students who network with college personnel, academic advisors, and personal counselors can strengthen their opportunities to access available resources, which may assist with academic success. The assessment instruments and lack of knowledge about the cultural background of Latino first-generation students contribute to misplacing students in courses. Latino students with language barriers are improperly labeled as disabled because of speech communication issues with faculty, staff, and academic advisors. Academic advisors who are intentionally committed to work with Latino first-generation college students can help strategize to overcome these challenges. Academic advisors should be required to attend professional development training to assist with understanding the cultural and academic background of Latino first-generation students.

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Literature Review

African-Centered Pedagogy: Exploring Black Male Identity and Achievement through an African-Centered Lens

Author: Kenneth O. Turner, Jr., Ed.D.

Although most African Americans (Blacks) are aware and support education, many are still suffering from poor academics and under achievement. Many African American students face school failure, high levels of drop-out rates, over representation in special education, and low college enrollment. This lack of attention has led to culturally insensitive and decontextualized curricula, policies, and reforms that do little to improve the education of large numbers of African Americans (Aldridge, 1999). Decontextualized educational policies and curricula often limit the educational knowledge base from which African Americans can draw culturally relevant and emancipatory knowledge (Gordan, 1990, 1993; Kincheloe, 1993).

My interest is around the development of Black males in educational achievement, specifically how cultural identification plays into the academic achievement of Black males. Understanding one's culture is of interest to me because I want to discover if understanding culture and history will help Black males do better academically and socially.

Black Male Identity

Cross (1991) relates the transition of Black identity through a five-stage theory of acquisition of Black identification. The process of becoming Black involves moving throughout the different stages of Blackness. The theory of Black racial identity development includes five stages: (a) *pre-encounter*, in which attitudes fall along a continuum and range from race being an insignificant part of personal identity (race neutrality) to race being devalued by the individual to the point of self-hatred (race negative); (b) *encounter*, in which attitudes about race are directly or indirectly challenged by some personal or social event that provides a means for the individual to transform his or her existing conceptualizations of identity; (c) *immersion/emersion*, in which an individual's previously held racial attitudes are discarded in an attempt to become more involved in his or her Black cultural heritage; and (d) *internalization*, in which racial identity conflicts are resolved and, in turn, the individual internalizes a positive Black identity. The fifth and final stage, *internalization-commitment*, involves a sustained interest in Black affairs and a long-term commitment to ethnic concerns (Cross, 1991, p. 327).

Some of the reasons that Black males lack cultural understanding and continue to struggle in the educational settings may come from the following information. African American adolescents grapple with the additional task of developing a racial/ethnic identity in American social milieu that is often polarized along racial lines (Monteith & Spicer, 2000; Winant, 1998), and is replete with negative racial stereotypes (Hudley & Graham, 2001). Undoubtedly, African American identity has been shaped by a history of oppression and marginalization in American society that dates from the 1600s, with the arrival of the first Africans in this country (Bogle, 1994). For example, scurrilous depictions of incompetence, laziness, and aggression (e.g., Devine & Elliott, 1995) have their genesis in this country's historical attempts to nationalize slavery and state-sanctioned racial terrorism (Irving & Hudley, 2008, p. 676). The scholars above focus on what it means to have identity and culture in America and how this identity shapes one's view of the world and how they function in it.

When do people start to embrace racial stereotypes? Why do they develop? And what do we do when students start to view others that do not look like us as being less than them or even less than human. "Black and White middle school youth were more likely than fourth graders to endorse traditional academic race stereotypes, i.e., European Americans are smarter than African Americans. Thus, there is a growing body of research indicating that by the middle school years youth are aware of academic race stereotypes and have some tendency to endorse them" (Okeke, Howard, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley (2009).

A key understanding of the research indicates how Black students and especially how Black males are looked at in schools and in the society as a whole. There is a correlation of low academic achievement and high rates of prison incarceration of Black males. When looking at K-12 data Black males have higher rates of suspensions and high rates of special education placement compared to White students. Both Black and White boys perform their masculinity by breaking school rules; Black boys more often find themselves in trouble because of how their performances are interpreted. When White boys transgressed, school officials presumed that "boys will be boys," attributed "innocence to their wrongdoing," and believed that "they must be socialized to fully understand the meaning of their acts" (Ferguson, 2001, p. 80).

In contrast, when Black boys transgressed, their actions were "adultified." That is, their "transgressions were made to take on a sinister, intentional, fully conscious tone stripped of any element of naiveté" (Ferguson, 2001, p. 83). Michaels (1992) refers to the "anticipation of culture by race" (p. 677). That is, we presume that "to be Navajo you have to do Navajo things, but you can't really count as doing Navajo things unless you already are Navajo" (Michaels, 1992, p. 677). Although we must substitute Black for Navajo in this instance, the effect is the same. Such anticipation reifies race as a stable and objective category and links it deterministically. When race is operationalized in this way, we lose sight of Black heterogeneity and under-conceptualize accordant intersectionalities. In addition, we overlook the extent to which Blackness is reflected not only in the meaning students bring with them to school but also in the meaning that are imposed on them by school structures. In the process, we underestimate the emergent and dynamic meanings of race and the impact of racial discrimination (O'Connor, Lewis, & Mueller, 2007).

Cultural mistrust (i.e., the tendency for African Americans to distrust institutional, personal, or social context that are controlled by Whites) is a construct that attempts to capture the influence of discrimination on academic motivation. African American value education as a means to improve their social and economic circumstance. However, when confronted with poorly maintained, underfunded schools and ill-prepared teachers. African Americans may not trust the public schools to provide an adequate education. A belief that African Americans cannot expect equal educational services or access to the opportunity structure in the United States may have created both lowered expectations for the benefits of educational achievement and a devaluation of striving for achievement among African American adolescents. (Irving & Hudley, 2008, p. 678)

Although stereotypes may affect the self-perceptions of members of stigmatized groups, this may be the case only for those members whose personal identities emphasize membership in that group (Rosenberg, 1979). It cannot be assumed that race is a central aspect of every African American person's identity. Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous (1998) have conceptualized racial identity in African Americans as a multidimensional construct including four dimensions. *Racial salience* refers to the extent to which race is an important aspect of an individual's self-concept at a particular time in a specific context, whereas *racial ideology* is an individual's attitudes and beliefs regarding how African Americans should act. The third dimension is *racial regard*, or a person's evaluative judgment of his or her race. Two aspects of regard are defined: private (how an individual feels about African Americans) and public (an individual's view of how African Americans are seen by others). *Racial centrality* is the extent to which race is central aspect of an individual's self-definition (Seller et al., 1998).

In the essay written by Dr. Asa Hilliard, he speaks about six different conditions of self-image and how that affects educational outcomes for African American people in society: (1) When children don't learn, systems are deficient; (2) The race of the child does not tell us anything about the child's mental capacity to succeed in school; (3) Socioeconomic status is not a barrier to learning, if the student is exposed to good teaching; (4) Racism and bigotry are negative factors in teaching and learning; (5) Our children are not succeeding mainly because the masses of them have been abandoned; and, (6) The courts can mandate physical desegregation, but not educational environment that is high quality and nurturing (Hilliard, 1998, pp. 74-75).

There are three conditions that are referred to that students of color use when they have to approach or handle White culture, economics, and political dominance: (1) Cultural mainstreamers accept the ideology that members of a non-dominant group should be culturally, socially, economically, and politically assimilated, yet they can be racially and ethnically aware; (2) Noncompliant believers subscribe to a dominant achievement ideology and are even aware of the cultural norms prescribe for academic, social, and economic success. However, they favor their own culture presentations and exert little effort to adapt to the cultural prescriptions of the school and White society; and, (3) The Cultural straddlers bridge the gap between the cultural mainstreamers and the noncompliant believers. They are obviously strategic navigators, ranging from the students who play the game, and embrace the cultural codes of both school and home community to those who vocally criticize the schools' ideology while achieving well academically (Carter, 2006).

The information below from a variety of scholars illustrates the systemic failure of the educational system and how those failures contribute to underachievement of Black students. The norms and values in which school's function is European centered and focus on the needs of European-American students and their families. The struggles of African American (Black) students is systemic as well as the belief that students of color specifically African American students are inferior, lack the discipline to achieve, parent involvement is non-existent.

The findings also show that the application of the idea transcends a student's achievement level-that is, whether the student is a high achiever or a low achiever. The findings highlight the social significance of the processes of resistance to acting white, how students create in-group/out-group stylistic boundaries to maintain ethno specific identities. Students' respect for the value of education is not at stake, however. Rather, what is at stake is how students use the symbols and meaning they attach to different racial, ethnic, and cultural identities as measures of inclusion and exclusion. (Carter, 2006, p. 318)

When Black students were in high track classes their peers would accuse them of acting white but when the classes were proportionately Black and high track classes there was no accusation of acting White found (p. 323).

Although our national discourse on racial disparity tends to focus on academic outcomes the so-called achievement gap in school districts throughout the United States, Black, Latino, and American Indian students are also subject to a differential and disproportionate rate of school disciplinary sanctions, ranging from office disciplinary referrals to corporal punishment, suspension, and expulsion. (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008, p. 59).

The Children's Defense Fund (1975) first brought the issue of racial disproportionality to national attention, showing that black students were two to three times overrepresented in school suspensions compared with their enrollment rates in localities across the nation. National and state data show consistent patterns of Black disproportionality in school discipline over the past 30 years, specifically in suspension, (McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002), expulsion (Kewel Ramani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007, and office discipline referrals (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002, p. 59).

One of the most consistent findings of modern education research is the strong positive relationship between time engaged in academic learning and student achievement. The school disciplinary practices used most widely throughout the United States may be contributing to lowered academic performance among the group of students in greatest need of improvement. Suspended students may become less bonded to school, less invested in school rules and course work, and subsequently, less motivated to achieve academic success. Students who are less bonded to school may be more likely to turn to lawbreaking activities and become less likely to experience academic success. (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010, p. 60)

Faced with repeated academic struggles, underperforming students may become frustrated and disaffected and have lower self-confidence, all which may contribute to a higher rate of school disruption. Low literacy achievement in the elementary grades is linked to later aggression in third and fifth grades. Similar patterns have been found in later grades-low achievement in middle and high school is linked with more serious forms of aggression (Gregory et al., 2010, p. 61).

Through the guidance of family members and support from the community, Black children learn that despite social barriers they are able to excel and prosper. Cultural socialization occurs as families provide children with a historical and cultural map of the African American experience and describes how they have survived many adverse conditions beginning with slavery. They learn how religious beliefs and extended family have served to strengthen and insulate them from the negative effects of racism and discrimination (DeGruy, Kjellstrand, Briggs, & Brennan, 2011, p. 399).

Schools are driven by middle class, White, heterosexual norms that determine definitions of success. Students who are more familiar or aligned with this dominant culture are more likely to be seen as academically successful as the school environment caters to this orientation. These processes often occur covertly, with little conscious awareness among teachers and administrators, even when students of color speak to its existence. Relationships in schools' organizational spaces tend to operate according to an investment in Whiteness, an investment that sustains racist ideologies and attitudes created to maintain and rationalize White privilege and power. Because of the invisible or neutral status of whiteness, the mechanisms through which this process occurred were also invisible (Chambers & McCready, 2011, p. 1353).

Schools in which these norms are fully entrenched have little interest in seeing race or other forms of diversity and the particular needs these students might have. Accordingly, students of color may find few avenues of support in such institutions. Students whose cultural orientations fall outside the mainstream culture of the school are often marginalized (Chambers et al., 2011, p. 1353).

"Racial opportunity cost, which is defined as the degree to which schools force students of color to give up, sacrifice, or disconnect from aspects of their racial identity to meet socially constructed norms for academic success" (Chambers et al., 2011, pp. 1355-1356).

What is less understood is how environment and cultural forces influence the way in which Black males come to perceive schooling and how those perceptions influence their behavior and performance in school. There is considerable evidence that the ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds of students have bearing on how students are perceived and treated by adults who work with them within schools (Noguera, 2003, p. 433).

Poor children generally receive inferior services from schools and agencies that are located in the inner city, and poor children often have many unmet basic needs. This combination of risk factors means it is nearly impossible to establish cause and affect relationships among them. Throughout the country, Black children are overrepresented in special education programs. Those most likely to be placed in such programs are overwhelmingly Black, male, and poor. Rather than serving as a source of hope and opportunity, some schools are sites where Black males are marginalized and stigmatized. In school, Black males are more likely to be labeled with behavior problems and as less intelligent even while they are still very young. Black males are also more likely to be punished with severity, even for minor offenses, for violating school rules and often without regard for their welfare. They are more likely to be excluded from rigorous classes and prevented from accessing educational opportunities that might otherwise support and encourage them. Consistently, schools that serve Black males fail to nurture, support, or protect them (Noguera, 2003, p. 436).

African-Centered Pedagogy

Foundations. Black Power was the slogan of the '60s and '70s that focused on achieving self-determination and racial pride. From the movement came ideologies of Black consciousness and the connection to the African past and the greatness of African people. Out of the movement came schools that focused their teaching and instruction around African values and the knowledge of the African past that had not been talked about nor taught in public schools. Dr. W.E.B. DuBois (1903) in his work *The Souls of Black Folk* and Dr. Carter G. Woodson (1933) and his work *The Mis-education of the Negro* both focused their life work on Black thought and intellect. They examined the forces behind Black people becoming racially conscious and the need of an educational system that held Black people at the center and not at the outside of the educational process.

At the beginning of the 21st century, African Americans continue to lack a comprehensive, cohesive, emancipatory, and culturally relevant educational theoretical model to help them successfully navigate American society (Dunn, 1991; Gordan, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Moreover, in developing curricula and policies, policymakers and educators rarely consult theories or models that are based on the life experiences and realities of African Americans (Anyon, 1995a, 1995b; Hilliard, 1998; Kincheloe, 1993). This lack of attention has led to culturally insensitive and decontextualized curricula, policies, and reforms that do little to improve the education of large numbers of African American students. Decontextualized educational policies and curricula often limit the educational knowledge base from which African Americans can draw culturally relevant and emancipatory knowledge (Gordan, 1990, 1993; Kincheloe, 1993).

Among African American notables, however, DuBois left the most comprehensive set of writings and views from which educators and policymakers can obtain contextualized, historical, and African American-based perspectives on education (Alridge, 1999; Dunn, 1991; Hilliard, 1998). DuBois never left a model of how African American people should be educated. DuBois believed the only way for African American people to be free socially, economically, and politically was to have an education.

In the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, DuBois educational thinking became more eclectic, reflecting his lifelong increasing interest in the condition of African Americans in the context of world affairs. DuBois recognized the U.S. government's hypocritical position of calling for democracy abroad while denying African Americans democracy at home. He became very vocal about contradictions between American democratic rhetoric and practice. He urged Black people to remain cautious about their hopes for full citizenship rights and integration. DuBois was somewhat optimistic about potential democracy for African Americans after the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. He prophetically warned that integration would not improve education for African Americans unless their children's cultural needs were met. He predicted: If and when they [African Americans] are admitted to these schools, certain things will inevitably follow. Negro teachers will become rarer and, in many cases, disappear. Negro children will be instructed in the public schools and taught under unpleasant if not discouraging circumstances (DuBois, 1960/1973, p. 151).

“What was unanticipated by the U.S. Supreme Court in the two *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case was the pervasive and irreversible damage that might be inflicted on poor Black children reared in stable yet ecologically constructed social worlds” (Wilkinson, 1996, p. 28). According to Edgar Epps,

Desegregation, especially in the South, was achieved largely by closing Black schools and busing the students to predominantly White schools. This resulted in many Black teachers and administrators losing their jobs and being demoted. The result for many African American children is a loss of an important social resource. African American teachers often represent surrogate parent figures, firm disciplinarians, empathetic counselors, positive role models and advocates. (Epps, 1998, p. 8)

As systemic racial balance remedies became a dictating force in many school districts, previously held community attachment, values and standards were eroded (Walker, 1996; Wilson & Segall, 1996).

African American teachers and administrators expected every child to succeed (Alexander & Miller, 1989; Posey & Sullivan, 1990) in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools and to become an asset to society rather than a liability (Posey & Sullivan, 1990). Role model research undergirds the assumption that teachers of color are vital in both their learning experiences, academic, and professional aspirations. Teachers of color ensure not only their aspiration levels (Joint Center for Political Studies, 1989; Smith 1989), educational development or achievement levels (Holmes, 1990), but their emotional, social, and psychological development or self-worth are advanced rather than diminished (Holmes, 1990).

Any society is judged on how it educates its people and how the people contribute to the overall success of that society. African-centered education is a foundation of teaching and learning that puts Africa at the center of the educational process. DuBois warned of the impact that hundreds of years of enslavement, oppression, and institutionalized racism could have on the collective and individual psyches of African Americans (DuBois, 1904, 1939; Stewart, 1996). African Americans, DuBois argued, were constantly reminded of their supposed inferiority and kept in a quasi-state of slavery within the Jim Crow system of the south. At the same time, Whites expected African Americans to be patriotic, to fight for their country and to believe that America was truly a meritocracy in which they could navigate freely. This contradiction, DuBois often stated, created a psychic tension in the minds of African Americans that, if not addressed, could give them negative images of themselves and their culture: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (DuBois, 1903/1994, p. 2).

DuBois believed that to respond to their psychological oppression in Western society, African Americans would have to ground themselves in African and Black culture. Surrounding themselves with positive images of African and Black culture and history would put African Americans on par with European

Americans, allowing them to deflect negative images of themselves. The conflict between their own culture and American culture, what Dubois called “double-consciousness” or “twoness”, could be transcended by African Americans who simultaneously immersed themselves in African and Black culture and incorporated positive aspects of Western society (DuBois, 1903/1994, 1940/1984; Lewis, 1993; Stewart, 1983). An African American-centered education would teach students about the culture and historical accomplishments of African countries and use African and Black American culture and history as frames of reference (Alridge, 1999).

As early as the 1900s, DuBois realized that the Negro problem was too complex and deeply engrained in the psyches of both Whites and Blacks to be comprehensively understood within the confines of American racism toward Blacks. Prevailing views of African American inferiority, he believed, had roots deeply grounded in Western thought and even in politics that expanded beyond the shores of the United States. To understand racism toward African Americans, DuBois felt that one had to examine the racism and oppression of people of African descent around the world. DuBois believed that a strong Pan-African political movement could be formed that would eventually obtain enough political and economic strength to overthrow European colonization and overcome the oppression of African people around the globe (DuBois, 1968).

Other scholarly works that emphasized a Pan-Africanist educational perspective included DuBois’ plans for an *Encyclopedia of the Negro*, *Encyclopedia Africana*, and the *Brownies Book*. These projects placed the study of African-descended people at the center of education and grounded knowledge and education in an African diasporic perspective (DuBois, 1933). DuBois’ own words capture the essence of the Pan-Africanist educational perspective: “Pan-African means intellectual understanding and co-operation among all groups of Negro descent in order to bring about at the earliest possible time the industrial and spiritual emancipation of the Negro peoples” (p. 247). The Pan-Africanist goal is to erase the negative images and raise the people out of inferiority by providing an education about self.

DuBois recognized the challenges of a global educational perspective: The freedom to learn, curtailed even as it is today has been bought by bitter sacrifice. And whatever we may think of the curtailment of other civil rights, we should fight to the last ditch to keep open the right to learn, the right to have examined in our schools not only what we believe, but what groups and nations, and the leaders of other centuries have said. We must insist upon this in order to give our children the fairness of a start which will equip them with such an array of facts and such an attitude toward truth that they can have a real chance to judge what the world is and what its greater minds have thought it might be (DuBois, 1949/1991, p. 231).

DuBois was a scholar who wrote, spoke, thought, acted, and responded to the most pressing issues confronting people of African descent at the moment in which he was thinking and writing. He was an intellectual who always stayed abreast of the issues incident to Black people around the world, and in United States in particular, and who revised his views and positions when he believed it was necessary. To solve the “Negro problem” and dramatically improve the conditions of the Negro masses, DuBois believed that education should be grounded in the sociopolitical conditions of African Americans’ present reality (Alridge, 1999).

Woodson (1933), detailed accounts of how Black America were being mis-educated by the public school system. “The “educated Negroes” have the attitude of contempt towards their own people because in their own as well as in their mixed schools, Negroes are taught to admire the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin and the Teuton, and despise the African. The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled onto him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies” (Woodson, 1933, p. 7). The process of creating inferiority happens very early for many African American students as they try and navigate a system that was never designed in which to educate them. To handicap a student by teaching him that his black face is a curse and that his struggle to change his condition is hopeless is the worst sort of lynching. It kills one’s

aspirations and dooms him to a vagabondage and crime (Woodson, p. 8). Furthermore, Woodson describes once the mind has been controlled by the dominant culture, there is no need to inform them that they are inferiority people. If the culture and history of a people are stripped from them and replaced with a white ideology that is not their own, that has a psychological impact on how one sees themselves in the global world.

“The present system under the control of the Whites trains the Negro to be white and at the same time convinces him of the impropriety or the impossibility of him becoming white. It compels the Negro to become a good Negro for the performance of which his education is ill-suited” (Woodson, 1933, p. 20).

It was well understood that if by the teaching the history of the white man could be further assured of his superiority and the Negro could be made to feel that he had always been a failure, and that the subjection of his will to some other race is necessary, then, he would still be a slave. If you control a man’s thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. When you determine what a man shall think you do not have to concern yourself about what he will do. If you make a man feel that he is inferior, you do not have to compel him to accept an inferior status, for he will seek it himself. If you make a man think that he is justly an outcast, you do not have to order him to the back door. He will go without being told; and if there is no back door, his very nature will demand one. (Woodson, 1933 p. 60)

Today, more African Americans are searching for other methods of education for their children based on the traditions of African people. Afrocentricity is critical discourse that is being used to form a critical pedagogy known as African-centered education. African-centered pedagogy and curriculum are designed to teach African children in a manner that takes their history, culture, identity, and politics into account for the ultimate purpose of solving their problems (Asante, 1988; 1991; 1992; Giddings, 2001; Hilliard, 1998; Hoskins, 1991; Wilson, 1998).

Afrocentricity

Asante (1988) coined the term Afrocentricity, which has morphed over the years to African-centered education. Afrocentricity is an epistemology that seeks to re-enter/ relocate African people-Black Africans on the continent of Africa and people of Black African descent in the Diaspora-in their own particular, yet connected, cultures for the ultimate purpose of their social, political, and economic liberation (Asante, 1998; 1999; Hilliard, 1998; Wilson, 1998). Thus, Afrocentric curriculum researchers and scholars believe that by studying the classical African civilizations, and the various African societies that branched off from them, they can demystify the history of African people (and world history as well), which has been systematically falsified, distorted, segmented, and erased in order to support the interests of foreign invaders (Akbar, 1991; Asante, 1988; Caruthers, 2000; Diop, 1974; 1991; Hoskins, 1991; Williams, 1974).

Afrocentricity is also a method of healing by changing the focus onto self rather than those that oppress. Afrocentric curriculum researchers and scholars attempt to provide a framework for the reconstruction of African cultures and identities (most of which have been de-centered/ dislocated and disrupted by the Maafa) around the best morals, values, and cultural practices that both traditional and contemporary African societies have to offer (Ani, 1994; Asante, 1988; Hilliard, 1998; Richards, 1994; Williams 1974). The aspect of teaching students about their own historical and cultural traditions promotes a sense of pride in one’s self. In addition, an important part of the achievement process involves the connection of education to students’ interests and the development of a positive sense of self (Woodson, 1933).

Afrocentric pedagogy is both compensatory and critical. It is compensatory because it re-enters/relocates dislocated African people in a centered cultural frame of reference that helps them view the world as agents rather than as mere objects and victims (Asante, 1999). It is critical because it helps African people to

realize the consciousness necessary to question and resist the cultural, social, political, and economic domination of non-African people (Asante, 1999). Afrocentric curriculum scholars and researchers assert that African-centered education should empower African people to deal with their problems not only by reconstructing and preserving African history, culture, and identity but also by employing other strategies (Asante, 1998; Caruthers, 2000; Collins, 2000; Williams, 1974; Wilson, 1998). For instance, African-centered education is designed to teach African children to engage in the indispensable process of building institutions (e.g., schools, businesses, banks, political parties, etc.) that support their communities (Caruthers, 2000; Williams, 1974; Wilson, 1998).

Afrocentric Education

Jeffries (1991) and Johnson (2001) argued that Afrocentric education possesses at least three dimensions: (1) a skills function, (2) a moral function, and (3) a spiritual function. That is, African-centered curriculum is about balancing “traditional” disciplines (e.g., math, science, language, writing), morals and values (e.g., MAAT and Nguzu-Saba), and spirituality (e.g., understanding our relationship to the Creator and our ancestors) in order to give African children a complete education. What does the African-centered pedagogy provide Black students that they will not be able to receive in the traditional educational system?

African centered education enables students to look at the world with Africa as the center. It encompasses not only those instructional and curricular approaches that result in a shift in students' worldview, but it engenders a reorientation of their values and actions as well...It involves more than mere textbooks and other curricular materials; it encompasses a supportive, understanding, and encouraging school climate. It demands that children be viewed as educable and as descendants of a long line of scholars. (Durden, 2007, pp. 74-75)

According to Woodson (1990), Black children were not able to reach their full potential because schools eliminate African culture and traditions and instead focus on European culture and values. Karenga (1995) found African-centered schools are structured on a holistic development of Black children. These schools focus their instructional practices on the students learning styles in order to bring the African experience into the center of their teaching. An African centered perspective and institutional autonomy were two premises behind the formation and maintenance of recently created African centered schools. This African centered perspective subscribes to the spiritual and cultural ethos of African people, and it is situated in an African worldview, which offers a “method of thought and practice rooted in the cultural image and human interests of African people” (Karenga, 1995, p. 45).

The primary aims of an African centered educational experience were not only to adhere to a particular ideology of African people but also to implement instructional practices that support the unique learning styles of Black students. These practices are then implemented using a curriculum rooted in the reality and history of African people. By embracing ancient and contemporary African culture, African centered schools counteract the hegemonic forces that trivialize the contributions of Africans and Blacks in America. (Durden, 2007, p. 28).

The connection of Black thought and knowledge of self are important for people of African descent to bridge the gap of the past with the present as well as the future. Karenga (1995) pointed out that African centeredness should not be viewed as a dogma of authenticity but as an orientation and methodology that does not shun the value of the diversity of perspectives and approaches in the study of African Americans (Karenga, 1995, pp. 36-38). The African centered pedagogy aims to re-enculturate Black children back into a set of habits, consciousness, and identity that centers them on a firm understanding of who and what they

are. According to Merry and New (2008), Black children must be at the center of the instruction, so that they are seen as the subject, and not an object, of the instruction. “In doing so, the learner comes to interpret the world through a cultural understanding that has been constricted within, about, and for his or her own community. What follows, according to African-centrists, is greater self-esteem and higher academic achievement” (Merry & New, 2008, p. 10).

Karenga (1982) noted that African centeredness is a conceptual framework rooted in the African experience and the worldview that issues from and is informed by that experience. It is quality of thought and practice rooted in the cultural image and human interests of African people, Nobles (1973, 1986, 1991, pp. 403-404) asserted that it is not possible to talk about the African self-concept without talking about the effect of African people being dominated, oppressed, and subjugated by European people. He explained that despite a substantial period of contact, the two systems of consciousness (i.e., self-knowledge) remained different. Nobles maintained that the oppressive system of slavery indirectly encouraged the retention, rather than the destruction, of the African philosophical orientations. He argued that the African self-concept is by philosophical definition the “we” instead of the “I”. It recognizes that only in terms of one’s people does the individual become conscious of one’s own being.

The concept of the Black self owes its existence to Kambon (1992), who defines it as being at the conscious level of the African survival thrust. It is a relational disposition that is collective, communal, and susceptible to environmental and social forces and influences. It is considered to be partly genetically determined and partly environmentally determined. An African self-consciousness is reflective of such attitudes and behaviors as (a) awareness of one’s African identity (a collective consciousness), (b) recognition of African survival and positive development as a major preoccupation, (c) respect for and active perpetuation of things African, and (d) an unequivocal, uncompromising resistance to all things anti-African (Kambon, 2001, pp. 53-55).

Historically, American public schools have failed to provide a quality education for Black students (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Educational scholars argued that this failure was an intentional means to mis-educate the masses of Blacks in order to prohibit cultural and intellectual liberation (Freire, 1973; Hilliard, 1998; King, 1991; Woodson, 1990). Since the 1700s, Blacks have designed independent schools to meet the cultural and intellectual needs of their children (Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987). Towards the end of the 19th century, Black independent schools were replaced by public schools and thus socialized in the thought and reality of European culture (Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987; Woodson, 1990).

Black Americans throughout the United States began to voice their concerns about the poor educations that their children were receiving in public schools. This movement was known as the African Centered School Movement-nostalgic of the Black independent schools of the 1700s. During this movement Black Americans demanded control of public schools or created independent institutions outside of public structures (Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987). The latter efforts were known as the Independent African Centered School Movement, which stressed academic excellence as well as cultural relevance and character development (Lee, 1992). Additionally, this movement was in response to the dismal failure of public education for Black students and the heightened international movement for Pan-African unity (Giddings, 2001). To protect and maintain this Afro-centric reality, institutional autonomy served as the means for allowing this voice to emerge in the education of Black children (King & Wilson, 1994). Furthermore, an independent status allowed for resources and vitality to come from the community which inevitably ensured the development of liberatory pedagogy and African centered perspectives (Lee, 1994, 2005).

In 1972, The Council for Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) was created to organize African-centered allies as well as African-centered schools. Additionally, CIBI and these independent schools are charged with socializing and educating children to be the spiritual, economic, political, and intellectual leaders they

are destined to become. Moreover, African centered schools embrace the traditional wisdom that *children are the reward of life* (The Council for Independent Black Institutions, 1994).

The African centered movement was not only nostalgic of Woodson's (1990) revelations of the fundamental problems of the "mis-education of the Negro," but also a result of the outcry among community groups in Black neighborhoods who were outraged at the poor educational experiences given to their children. They wanted educational culturally salient experiences that they believed would produce academic excellence. This cry for academic excellence and culturally relevant pedagogical practices was deeply rooted in a worldview that was in opposition to the Eurocentric ideology that is the basis for most schools in the United States (Grills, 2004).

To truly embrace an African centered worldview, one must first adopt an African reality that is consistent with the experiences and realities of African people. Grills (2004) noted that in order to efficiently apply an African centered paradigm, one must "examine or analyze the phenomena with a lens consistent with an African understanding of reality; African values; African logic; African methods of knowing; and African historical experiences" (p. 173). The seven cardinal virtues of MAAT become the compass towards human perfectibility. These virtues are truth, justice, harmony, balance, order, reciprocity, and propriety. They are the essence and foundations of all experiences and engagement in an African centered school. Therefore, persons working in those schools believe that children are divine beings who bring with them gifts and talents from the Creator and ancestors (Nobles, 1990).

In the African centered school, the focus is on placing the child at the center of the educational process. Since the children are the key of the learning process the African centered schools place the unique learning styles of Black children into the classroom instruction. Therefore, the schooling experience of many Black students are not culturally sensitive or affirming (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). Furthermore, scholars and advocates of African centered schools suggested that school experiences for children should be congruent with their level of expression, activity, and learning styles (Azibo, 1996; Fukiau & Lukondo, 2000; Hilliard, 1992; Some, 1999).

Asante (1988) outlined the transformational process one takes when moving into an African-centered sense of being. The book *Afrocentricity* set a course of thinking and action that many Black people felt was need to be taught to their children as well as the community. Afrocentricity is a transforming power, which helps us to capture the true sense of our souls. There are five levels of awareness leading to transformation. The first level is called *skin recognition* which occurs when a person recognizes that his or her skin and/ or her heritage is Black but the person cannot grasp any further reality. The second level is *environmental recognition*. At this level, the person sees the environment as indicating his or her blackness through discrimination and abuse. The third level is *personality awareness*. It occurs when a person says "I like music, or dance, or chitterlings" and indeed the person may be speaking correctly and truthfully but this is not Afrocentricity. The fourth level is interest-concern. This level accepts the first three levels and demonstrates interest and concern in the problems of blacks and tries to deal intelligently with the issues of the African people. *Afrocentric awareness*, the fifth level, is when the person becomes totally changed to a conscious level of involvement in the struggles for his or her own mind liberation. Only when this happens can we say that the person is aware of the collective conscious will. An imperative of will, powerful, incessant, alive, and vital, moves to eradicate every trace of powerlessness. Afrocentricity is like rhythms; it dictates the beat of your life (Asante, 1988, p. 49).

African American people need an African-centered pedagogy because racism and worldwide Eurocentric hegemonic attitudes and practices are still the order of the day. The existing pedagogy in public education remains European-centered (Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994, p. 14). Nevertheless, enslavement and the African holocaust interrupted and depoliticized the cultural memory as well as disrupted historical continuity for Africans in the diaspora. Slavery and colonialism had similar effects on development within

the African continent (Akabr, 1984; Bennett, 1964; Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994; Rodney, 1972; Williams, 1974). An African-centered pedagogy is needed to support a line of resistance to these conditions; it is needed to produce an education that contributes to achieving pride, equity, power, wealth and cultural continuity for Africans in America and elsewhere (Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994, p. 16). African-centered pedagogy and curriculum are designed to teach children in a manner that takes their history, culture, identity, and politics into account for the ultimate purpose of solving their problems (Asante, 1988; 1991; 1992; Giddings, 2001; Hilliard, 1998; Hoskins, 1991; Wilson, 1998). According to Merry and New (2008), African-centered pedagogy is therefore a problem-solving pedagogy. Its proponents claim that children who internalize its philosophy undergo a transformation leading to enlightenment concerning their authentic self, empowerment concerning the options laid out before them, and self-determination concerning the choices they make. African-centered pedagogy is researched from a theory and practice-based approach but from the literature I have not been able to locate the statically date that points to by using ACP increase or decrease Black male academic achievement. The researcher is clear that the study of African-centered pedagogy and how that teaching method can influence Black male students. Through the lens of cultural and historical information this can shape the way in which Black males can see the following: (1) possibly view the world around them, and (2) gain knowledge and understanding of the importance of education. In the current educational system, Black male students have had multiple negative encounters which have created an environment of alienation, isolation, avoidance and negative judgment of abilities.

The relationship between curriculum, images, and discipline is of paramount importance. If an African American child attends two years of pre-school, nine years of elementary, four years each at high school and college, it will total nineteen years. If we multiply this with the average six-hour day, thirty-hour week, or twelve-hundred-hour year, we derive a sum of 22,800 hours. This figure is simply too large to ignore. Children spend large amounts of time in school, and how they feel about themselves can easily be determined within these 22,800 hours. If we also realize the relationship between academic achievement and economic possibilities, it may behoove us to critically assess what takes place in the classroom. Are our children being nurtured? Are they being given high expectations? Are they being encouraged to ask questions? Are they maintaining their curiosity? Are we teaching them how to think? (Kunjufu, 1984, p. 31).

This study has examined how teaching from an African-centered pedagogy can foster a strong racial identity among Black males. Lastly, the research has examined what it means to be Black and also measure Black males' connections to their own cultural group.

The research has also explored the individual's own beliefs, opinions, and attitudes with respect on what it means to be Black in America. What differs from other research is that I have used The Multidimensional Model of Black Identity (MMBI) to test how middle school students saw themselves from a racial standpoint. The MMBI focuses on Black (African) Americas' beliefs regarding the significance of race in (a) how they define themselves, and (b) the qualitative meaning that they ascribe to membership in that racial group. Thus, the primary phenomena that the MMBI attempts to describe are attitudes and beliefs that may influence behaviors or be products of behaviors. In an attempt to delineate the significance and meaning of race in the self-concepts of Black (African) Americans, the researchers of the MMBI have delineated four dimensions: (1) identity salience, (2) the centrality of the identity, (3) the ideology associated with the identity, and (4) the regard in which the person holds African Americans (Shelton & Sellers, 1996). The research has also looked at ways in which to create learning environments that are supportive, nurturing, and provide high academic rigor for Black males.

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