Familial Influences on the Identity Development of Latino First-Year Students

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Eighty-three first-year Latino students from seven institutions participated in this qualitative study of the familial influences on identity development. Using grounded theory methodology, the category of Situating Identity is further explored by looking specifically at the condition called Generation in the United States and Familial Influences and the impact this condition has on how Latino first-year students situate their ethnic identity. The condition is described through three properties that explain the continuous dimension: Acculturated Parents, Less Acculturated Parents, White Parent or Parents.

Family members are the primary conveyers of cultural heritage within any ethnic group. The notion of familialism is even more important within Latino cultures (Marin, 1993). *Familialism* is defined as "that cultural value which includes a strong identification and attachment of individuals with their nuclear and extended families, and strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity among members of the same family" (Marin, p. 184). Although the influence of familialism on the Latino/a population is often mentioned in the literature little information exists to describe how that influence develops or to describe the context that creates that influence. This broad notion of familial influence is moderately accepted, however, few researchers consider what constitutes the dimensions of this

influence and what potential consequences this influence can have on the educational experiences of Latino/a college students. This article provides insight into the condition of "Familial Influence and Generational Status in the US" through the results from a longitudinal qualitative study conducted with first-year college students.

The importance of this research is discussed briefly below, followed by a short review of existing literature on the familial influence on ethnic identification. Because grounded theory methodology was used in this study, the review of literature is provided to illustrate the theoretical sensitivity that existed to help me conceptualize and formulate the theory that emerged from the data (Glasser & Strauss, 1999).

The more that practitioners understand about the cultural socialization processes of first-year students, the more higher education institutions can assist Latino/a students to be successful. "The manner in which we empower students is based on a cultural understanding of their local contexts and how such understandings might be incorporated into the basic fabric of the institution" (Tierney, 2000, p. 221). Finding out the local definitions of identity is one of the key points Tierney posits for a different framework that considers "the negotiation of identity in academe as central to educational success" (p. 219). Rather than looking at student success through statistical attributes or deficiency models, what is needed is a better

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understanding of how Latino/a students make meaning of their role or identity in academe. By understanding the conditions that influence how Latino/a students situate their identity, practitioners can begin to create local definitions of identities that can better serve the institution in helping students maneuver the academic environment (Torres, 2003).

REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE ON FAMILIAL INFLUENCES

The familial influences on Latino/a students are documented in the ethnic identity literature (Keefe & Padilla, 1987) as well as in the retention literature (Attinasi, 1989; Rendón , 1992). Within the ethnic identity literature familialism is referenced as the structure that mitigates cultural change processes, such as acculturation or ethnic identification (Keefe & Padilla; Marin, 1993). Research on Latino families found that they tend to participate in more interactions with their relatives and depend more on family members for assistance instead of larger institutions or groups (Marin). Although there are some similarities between Latino and Anglo family systems, one major difference was found, the pattern of fictive kinship or godparents, (*padrinos*) or co-parents that are close family friends (*compadres*) (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). Among various research studies the importance of family membership and level of family loyalty is consistent. Perhaps more important than the presence of family is the role family members play in helping form a person's ethnic identity.

The information adolescents learn about their culture and ethnic identity is influenced by parents' level of acculturation, economic position, and other environmental variables (Knight, Bernal, Cota, Garza, & Ocampo, 1993). Ethnic identity is formed as an individual considers one's sense of self as part of an ethnic group (Bernal, Knight, Ocampo, Garza, & Cota, 1993). The concept of a Latino/a ethnic identity is based on the fact that once in the US "the unique historical and sociological context of the United States creates the backdrop for Latino identity" (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001, p. 37). This self-identification is mitigated by the choices made between the American and Latino culture of origin and is therefore an important aspect of development (Garza & Gallegos, 1995; Torres, 1999).

Recognition of the importance of cultural identity and family influence is also found in the retention literature. Rendón (1992) illustrated through her personal story the level of disconnect from family and culture she experienced when she left home to further her education. As a way to advocate for diverse students, Rendón states that the ideal classroom is one where students are allowed to write about their cultural experiences and where these experiences are validated as worthwhile knowledge. Although the actual process of attendance may alienate a Latino/a student from family, parents and extended family members provide initial expectations of college attendance (Attanasi, 1989). The role of families for Latino/a college students is an important factor that needs further exploration and in-depth analysis.

This study was part of a longitudinal project exploring the Latino college experience. The uniqueness of this study is in the diversity of institutions included, thus expanding the contexts considered and allowing for a broader view of the phenomenon. This qualitative study includes interviews with 83 self-identified Latino

first-year students at seven higher education institutions. The process of theoretical sampling necessitates that the sample considered in a study be purposely selected or expanded "to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimensions" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 201). Through theoretical sampling, researchers can make the emerging theory more useful and more clearly "identify conceptual boundaries" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 519). In earlier work, Torres (2003) pointed to the theory-building process and recommended consideration of different contexts to understand better the process of ethnic identity in Latino/a college students. The results of this study include multiple contexts and expand the emerging theory by Torres (2003) for understanding how familial issues influence the manner in which identity is situated. Expanded studies like this one are meant to inform and refine the development of theory process (Charmaz). The results from the expanded sample yielded additional dimensions and variations to those previously identified as making up the Family Influence and Generation in the US condition (Torres, 2003). As a review of the manner in which the data are presented, the dimensions represent the range of properties along a continuum depicting the specific characteristics of the condition (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Research Design

This study uses a constructivist epistemology, which recognizes that the interaction between researcher and participants is necessary to understand the meaning of experiences shared during the research process (Charmaz, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethnic modeling also influences the paradigmatic or theoretical lens used in the research process because I am of the same ethnicity as the participants and because this study promotes the holistic explanation of how the participants construct their own experiences (Stanfield, 1994). Grounded theory methodology is used because the goal of the research is to ground emerging theory in data to provide a plausible explanation of the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Using constructivist grounded theory methodology, the "'discovered' reality arises from the interactive process" inherent within the interactions between participant and researcher; which is a central tenet of qualitative research (Charmaz, p. 524). An accepted process within grounded theory methodology is to consider the fluid nature of grounded theories as sets of concepts that can be elaborated and moderated to provide greater understanding of conceptual relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The existing research (Torres, 2003) is limited by a singular context and requires further exploration of the concepts demonstrated. The longitudinal design of this study supports the central process of constant comparison between data analysis and collection that is needed to create conceptually dense theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Because context is an important aspect of qualitative research, the inclusion of multiple institutions (contexts) became necessary for refining the emerging theory. Again, one of the defining aspects of grounded theory methodology is the process of theoretical sampling in refining ideas (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Sampling Process

In the selection of institutions, two criteria were used to determine their inclusion in the sample. The first criterion revolved around identifying the type of institution and the

type of community or student body within the institution. Care was taken to include community colleges, public commuter four-year institutions that serve first-generation students, and private colleges. In addition, attention was paid to including institutions that were designated as Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs) as well as non-HSIs. The second criterion was willingness of the institution to participate and identify a campus contact. Using these criteria the following contexts were selected:

Context for the Study. Seven institutions were selected to be part of the study. Two were community colleges, one was designated as an HSI and the other was in a state where Latinos are the largest minority population within the state, yet they do not compose a critical mass within higher education institutions. Three urban universities were selected because they are primarily commuter institutions that serve the greater community within an urban area and because they tend to serve a high number of first-generation college students (neither parent graduated from college). Two of the urban universities are designated as HSIs, with one having approximately 90% Latino/a enrollment and the other having approximately 30% Latino/a enrollment. In the third urban university, Latinos/as are the largest minority group, but they only represent approximately 4% of the student population. And finally, two private colleges were selected. One is a small Catholic liberal arts college and the second is a research university; both are in diverse urban areas. The small private college is designated as an HSI.

Participants. Open sampling techniques were initially used to maintain a loose structure for determining the sample and because it does not close off or foreclose on any possibilities (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Because the number of Latino students at each institution varied, a random sample was asked to participate at the institutions with more than 200 Latino/a freshmen, whereas all self-identified Latino freshmen were asked to participate at institutions with fewer than 200 Latino/a freshmen. Of those contacted, 83 students agreed to participate in the interviews held on their campus. Nine are from the community colleges, 17 are from the private colleges, and 57 from the public urban universities. Nine countries of origin are represented in this sample of participants (Cuba, Columbia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela). The sample also contains 79.5% ($n = 66$) first-generation college students. The median age for the participants is approximately 22 years; the range is 18 to 52.

METHOD

The primary method used was interviews conducted within the participants' context. This required me to travel to each campus in Spring 2002 and 2003. The interviews were semistructured and focused on self-identification, family influence, and their college experiences.

Trustworthiness

The concept of trustworthiness refers to criteria used when viewing quality, or goodness, in qualitative research (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness prompts the researcher to reflect on both decisions and behavior during the inquiry process. Rather than providing traditional measures of validity, trustworthiness speaks to the quality of the process used. During this study I used various mechanisms to insure quality. The

first mechanism was to maintain a researcher's journal that provided a mechanism for intentional reflection and awareness of potential bias during the process. This journaling was important because of the similarity of experiences the participants share with my own. The second mechanism was to seek out multiple perspectives during the research inquiry process (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). By considering multiple perspectives in the grounded theory process, the various voices are considered. The longitudinal design allowed for the voices of the participants to be considered through member checks during the interview in the following year. Member checks were done by having the participants read a description of the emerging conditions and dimensions and asking them to comment on the authenticity of the description as well as on their general reaction to the material. In addition, multiple perspectives were considered during the data analysis process. Both a peer debriefer and inquiry auditors were used to consider multiple voices during the theory-building process. At the suggestion of an experienced qualitative researcher, who served as a peer debriefer, a 3-phase process was used during data analysis. In the first phase I discussed the individual interviews with four inquiry auditors. Once these were completed, constant comparison was done among the individuals within each of the context. This phase provided insight into environmental concerns as well as consideration of how the context influences students' interpretation their experiences. The final phase was to look at Torres' (2003) existing theory generated by Torres (2003) and consider whether the current data further grounded the emerging theory and incorporated all the aspects of the expanded sample and contexts. During this final phase, I determined that modifications and elaboration to Family Influence and Generational Status condition were needed to make the emerging theory more conceptually dense.

Analysis
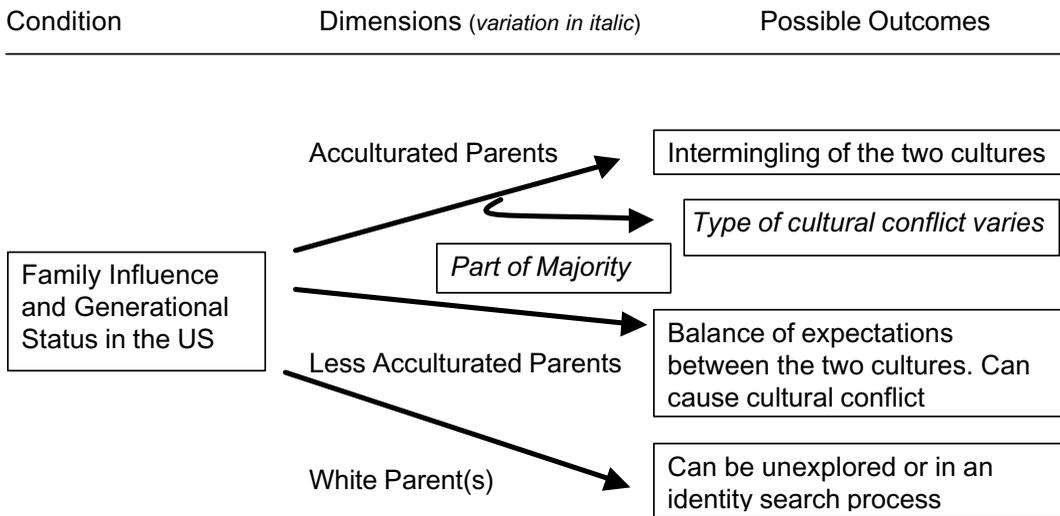
The interviews were transcribed verbatim,

FIGURE 1. Conceptual Figure of the Family Influence and Generational Status in the US

and for Phase 1 of the analysis, I and the inquiry auditors conducted a microscopic (line by line) examination of each interview (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) by myself and with the inquiry auditors. In Phase 2 of analysis, constant comparison was used to compare the participants within each of the contexts (institutions). In Phase 3, results were compared with the existing research to discover similarities and commonalities, which were then critiqued for new concepts. Once the category and condition emerged from the expanded sample, the analysis moved into axial coding, thus connecting— or in some cases reconnecting—the data, which provided a more conceptually dense and elaborate explanation of the concepts within the condition. These processes were done to reassemble the data in such a manner that can better explain the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Because this study illustrates the process of modifying and elaborating on existing research and further grounding the theory in data, the focus of this article is on illustrating the expansion of the emerging theory to explain the condition of Family Influence and Generational Status on Situating Latino Identity category (Torres, 2003).

Family Influence and Generational Status

This study extended the understanding of the "Family Influence and Generational Status" condition and how it relates to the category of Situating Latino Identity. Two issues emerged as important: the language used to self-describe students' identity and the expansion of the dimensions—the continuous properties that define the substance of the "Family Influence and Generational Status" condition. In the previous study, Torres (2003) identified the properties of

Acculturated and Less Acculturated parents, but the inclusion of students from multiple contexts expanded the properties found within the dimension.

Language. The language, label, and self-identification used by the participants was again influenced by parents (Torres, 2003), yet a distinct variation emerged among students living on the border of the US and Mexico. Although all students used various labels such as Latino/a, Hispanic, and Chicano/a, the label used in the border area focused on differentiating those who are born or live in the US from those who live in Mexico just a few miles away. Although these students tended use the term *Hispanic* to describe themselves, part of the meaning attached to this term included references that they were from the US and not from Mexico, even though the majority of these students claim the Mexican culture as their culture of origin. Their descriptions of the labels reflected societal views of undocumented workers, thus, this distinction between U.S.-born or U.S.-resident Mexican Americans, and those not in the US was more critical to this particular group of students. Monica expressed the meaning of saying she is Hispanic:

> [*Hispanic*] means the same thing as *Latino*, you know Mexican American. American because I was born in America, and Mexican because I have blood of my parents which were born in Mexico. . . . I can't say that I am a Mexican because I wasn't born over there. I might say [I'm Mexican], because I have the traditions, but still, I am an American.

Bob simply explained: "Hispanic because I was born in this side of the United States, and Mexican because . . . everybody in my family is Mexican." Although Latino stu-

dents in this geographic area of the US border compose the cultural majority, they seem to be burdened with a stereotype, feeling a need to prove their right to belong in the US.

Although language plays a role in how Latino/a students self-identify, generational status in the US also plays a major role. The dimension within this condition continues to be defined by the properties of Acculturated Parents and Less Acculturated Parents, but a variation emerged connected to the Acculturated Parents property of this dimension. An additional property was added to provide depth to the experiences of students who are half Latino and half Anglo, as well as those students who are of Latino background and were adopted by Anglo families.

The dimension of Acculturated Parents describes students who intermingle both Latino and Anglo cultures. They are comfortable choosing from both cultures and not feeling a need to deny or neglect their culture of origin. Araceli described the influence of her parents:

> I have been raised to speak Spanish at home. I speak Spanish with *la familia*. But yet they have always said, "You are Mexican, but you are American too. So don't let anyone put you down. Because you have a right just like everyone else that was born here."

Her comments illustrate her understanding of bicultural orientation and also articulate a self-efficacy for herself and her sense of ethnicity. Although Araceli is first-generation in the US, she lives in an area where Latinos are a small minority in a predominantly White environment. Acculturation may occur at a faster rate in areas where there is less visible identifiers with the Latino culture (Torres, Winston, &

Cooper, 2003). In actuality most of the students with acculturated parents are second- and third-generation in the US. Although these students may be born in the US, a new variation was found within this property that focused on the students who live in majority Latino communities.

The variation that emerged was most likely to be seen among the students who grew up in monocultural environments that are enclaves within majority culture cities. An example of this is Alejandra who attends an urban university in a city that has a significant number of Latinos and distinct Latino neighborhoods. Though her university is designated as an HSI, Latinos are not the majority within this campus. When asked how her parents reacted to her being in college, Alejandra describes the cultural conflict her father was experiencing:

> Well, I don't know. I think he is between the [cultures] because sometimes he is kind of hypocritical, I guess. Sometimes he is like, "Yeah—you should go to college and do this," but then he [says], "You are a girl, you know." So I think he is like debating himself. He should get over it.

Though the conflict Alejandra describes is also connected to gender roles within her culture, this acknowledgement of the conflict between the need for an education and the traditional roles for women in her culture illustrates that she must negotiate cultural conflict within her relationship with her parents. Though her father understood the importance of education in U.S. society, he clearly was concerned for how this would impact the culturally traditional role he expected her to play. Almost all of the students stated that their parents were supportive of them being in college, yet the majority also expressed that their parents did

not understand what it was like for them to be college. Although Biky's parents told her she needed to study and go to college, when asked if they understood what it was like for her to be in college she responded:

> No, . . . they know that I have to study, but sometimes they are like, "Do you really have to do all that?" And because sometimes I don't have time to help around the house, and my mom tells me, "Are you going to help me?"

Although this lack of understanding did not change the dimensional properties of this condition, it did elaborate on the impact this condition can have on the college experience.

The conflicts that have a cultural overtone can be even more pronounced among the students with Less Acculturated Parents. Lack of understanding is one of the potential cultural conflicts that students with less acculturated parents experience, but the focus on gender issues was clearer among the women with less acculturated parents. Approximately 74% of the students in this study lived at home with their parents and had to negotiate with their parents on a daily basis. Maria, who attends an urban university and commutes from her parent's home, is a second-generation in US student, yet her parents continue to hold onto traditional views. She described her parents' reaction to her having outside-of-class group meetings or study sessions:

> They are so strict. I have to sometimes go to meetings and projects and they are like— "Well, no." And I am like, "Well, this is different. It is not high school, it is not grammar school. It is college, I need to go out."

Rosalie, who also attends an urban university and commutes from her parent's home, described having to explain to her friends that she could not go out. She tries to tell her friends, "I am Mexican, our parents are very [strict]." When asked why she chose to attend that university, Rosalie's answer illustrates how this family influence also impacted college choice. She shared her decision making process by saying: "Because you know, I was like, I just wanted to go . . . away to school. Go in the dorms, but my Mom was like—'The only way you are moving out of this house is when you are married.'"

The possible consequences (outcomes) of this condition continue to be different levels of cultural conflicts. In this expanded study, students in monocultural environments who had parents that were either born in the U.S. or had been in the U.S. for a long time, still experienced cultural conflict in spite of their parents' apparent acculturation to the majority culture. This variation occurs when parents interact with the majority culture, but also maintain close ties to Latino enclaves. These families value their cultural traditions and those traditions were most in jeopardy when female students were experimenting with more freedom.

A completely new property emerged as part of the dimension explaining this condition. In this expanded study a property was needed to include students who come from families that are half Latino and half Anglo, and a few students who are born in Latin American countries and were adopted by Anglo parents. These students self-identified in a variety of ways, thus illustrating their own search for defining identity. In the case of Katelyn, a community college student who is half Mexican and half Anglo, she succinctly described herself as Mexican American. This self-identification was easy for her, and the meaning was described simply as "I have experienced the Mexican

culture, and I have experienced the Caucasian type of culture." She also indicated that people in her predominantly Anglo environment would sometimes think she was something other than Mexican American and mistake her for other races or ethnicities. In this case, Katelyn lives the majority of her time with the Anglo parent, thus having more interaction with Anglos than with Mexicans. Although Katelyn understood her mixed ethnicity, her description of what it meant illustrated a lack of exploration into the meaning of being Mexican American and that may change in the future.

Another example is Aldur, who is half Latino and half Anglo. He attends an urban university in a densely Latino populated area. When asked what term he preferred he responded by saying "American." He elaborated by saying that he did not "really like to call people Hispanic or African American. They are American." These statements illustrate an unexplored status of ethnic identity and a desire to be associated with the majority Anglo culture.

Also included in this property are students with Latino birth families who were adopted by Anglo families. Roberto was adopted as a baby, yet when asked how he describes himself, he quickly responded, "Costa Rican." Though his parents are from the majority culture, they have exposed Roberto to Costa Rican culture through trips and information about the country. He described his experiences:

> [Being Costa Rican] means a lot to me because in the sixth grade I went to visit Costa Rica, and it just taught me a lot about my culture and where I am from. And the people are like a lot of colors— I like the Latino culture a lot.

Roberto explained that he felt like he fit in when he was around other Latinos, saying "I don't know if more comfortable is the word, but I just feel like it is a warmer setting."

In addition to supportive parents, an older adopted brother also helped Roberto understand his culture. Although the two adopted brothers are from different countries, they support each other in exploring and searching for their own heritage. Roberto describes the support:

> I was raised exactly the same way as if I had been their birth child. My brother taught me a lot about myself, too, because like he had to go through everything before me, and so I think he had it a little harder than me growing up. . . . He is darker than me and looks more native [from cultural origin] than I do . . . He went through pretty much racism, and I didn't. And he taught me that it is out there.

Although Roberto understood and recognized the racism exhibited towards his brother, he did not see it affecting him in the same way. As he put it "I take it all in. I don't act on it, like to the extreme like him."

In all of these examples the participants understand their cultural heritage while maintaining strong connections to the Anglo culture. Although none of these students talked about an active search for their ethnicity, two of them (Katelyn and Roberto) expressed there was more to learn about the Latino portion of their culture.

DISCUSSION

Within the condition of Family Influence and Generational Status in the US, three new issues emerged as important. First is the understanding of why a student may say they are from the US even when they self-identify as Latino. The context-specific implication for students on the US/Mexico border

requires their self-identification to include a distinction between those who are residents of the U.S. and those who are residents of Mexico; though they may share a common culture, their contextual experiences and societal expectations are very different. There was a distinct impression that it was important to make sure others understand you are not undocumented, which feeds into this contextual distinction. Previous research has considered broader societal ecology (urbanization, socioeconomic status, minority status, and dominant group characteristics) as one of many links to the socialization of Latino families (Bernal & Knight, 1997); however, it has not provided insight regarding how this link is manifested in college students. The focus of this previous research has been on the socialization agents more than on the outcomes of the societal ecology.

The second issue is the variation of students in Latino enclaves, who on the surface may appear acculturated to the American culture, yet they experience a variety of cultural conflicts when they are in the educational environment. These conflicts are not as severe as those of students from less acculturated parents, yet they can influence the college experience. These students are more likely to hide their cultural conflict because they sense others may not understand or they may be ridiculed. The cultural conflicts illustrated here revolve around parental understanding and expectations. This issue is important on two levels: first, family support has been shown as important in the persistent of Chicana students (Gloria, 1997); and second, because the belief that they can not share these cultural conflicts is an illustration of the lack of cultural congruency within the campus climate (Gloria, Robinson Kurpius, Hamil-

ton, & Wilson, 1999). The lack of Latino/a faculty and staff makes the availability of mentors and advisors who understand Latino cultures very difficult.

The third issue is the emerging property illustrated by students who come from mixed backgrounds or who are adopted by White parents. These students may not be easily identifiable because their names may not provide a clue or their appearance may not provide any indication of their background. Though these students were blending into the overall environment of their colleges, this assimilation should be considered within the context of ethnic/racial identity development (Phinney, 1993) and the possibility that identity development issues surrounding ethnicity can emerge in the future and that this cultural conflict can affect their college experience. In the case of these students it is important to provide environments where they can express their uncertainties while being valued for however they choose to self-identify. Because they do not fit in traditional definitions of the "Latino" category, it is important to keep these students in mind when practitioners create their local definitions of identity (Tierney, 2000).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The ability to understand the components, or properties, of what constitutes the influence of family, generational status in the US, and the meaning of terms used to self-describe is critical to better serving Latino students in higher education. For practitioners who work with Latino students daily, the diversity of experiences and influences may confirm their own intuitions about these influences among Latino students. For practitioners who occasionally deal with a Latino student this study provides a frame-

work to better understand the potential influences of the students. Although practitioners may cognitively recognize the diversity of experiences among Latinos in the US, this acknowledgement may not be as clear when creating programs or promoting policies. Like many of today's college students, family background can be complex and nontraditional. Assumptions that both parents are from the same country of origin are unrealistic in many parts of the U.S. By considering the properties within the dimensions of this condition (Family Influence and Generational Status), practitioners can break down some of this complexity and gain insight into the familial and generational issues that Latino students face.

As more and more Latino/a students attend college, practitioners will need to understand both their personal and academic needs in order to serve the whole student. Although student affairs professionals place a high value on being acquainted with the whole student and diversity, there is evidence that practitioners may not receive sufficient training to deal with diverse students and specifically Latino/a students (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004). This article provides information about the influence of family from multiple perspectives; rather than assuming all Latino/a family situations are the same. The properties of the dimensions can be used to ask questions about the Latino/a student's parents to ascertain how the student situates their identity within the college environment. For example, an academic advisor or residence director may see a Latino/a student struggle and find out that he or she is first generation in the U.S. with parents who have limited English language skills. These are indicators that the student may be experiencing some cultural conflicts and is not sure how to deal with

them. This example illustrates the likelihood of less acculturated parents and the possible outcome of balancing of expectations that may cause cultural conflicts. Although I cannot provide a response for every type of cultural conflict, it is important to be aware that this is one of the possible issues the student is dealing with and the resolution of those conflicts are as important as other developmental issues.

As programs are adapted or created to serve the fast-growing population of Latino/a students, practitioners must consider the influence of cultural understanding on their institutional context (Tierney, 2000). Although not all Latino/a students are the same, programs often are set up as if they were all the same. Attempting to address differences within ethnic groups is difficult, yet important to consider. This is especially true for orientation programs. Although orientation programs attempt to address issues dealing with parents, the focus of these programs for Latino/a parents needs to differ slightly. Helping parents understand the level of work and expectations placed on college students as well as information on how to support their son or daughter is an important aspect in helping Latino/a students succeed.

Limitations

As a qualitative study, there is a limitation of generalizability. Although the size of the sample and the diversity of environments provide more variety in the sample, the stories of these students are connected to their own contexts. The theory-building process also has some limitations to consider. This study needs to be considered in perspective with a larger longitudinal study and should be considered in conjunction with the Torres (2003) article. The interrelated nature of longitudinal work necessitates that readers

consider these previous works along with more recent findings.

CONCLUSION

Longitudinal studies that expand the understanding of how Latino/a students situate their identity are critical to understanding the impact of cultural orientation on the college experiences of these students. For student affairs practitioners to better understand the population of Latino/a students they serve they must understand the conditions and the dimensions that explain the influences on how they situate their identity within the college environment.

The theory-building procedure used in this study helps practitioners understand the process of understanding development. Student development theory can provide a framework for understanding students who are different than oneself while pointing out the variety of identities incorporated within the labels used in higher education. This study is an example of how the properties within a condition can influence students to emerge with very different experiences and outcomes. For this reason, it is important to understand all the possible outcomes and not assume all Latino/a students have the same needs.

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