Advancing College Opportunity: New Theoretical Frameworks in the Field of Chicana & Chicano College Choice

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Latino Students: An Increasing Educational Policy Concern

- Largest racial/ethnic minority group in U.S.
  - One in four children in U.S. Latino by 2025
  - Largest K–12 student population in CA

- Low levels of educational capital
  - Nationally, 60% high school completion rate
  - 42% of Latinos 25 & older less than HS diploma
  - Latinos, least likely to complete college degrees
  - Majority of Latinos heavily concentrated in community college
    - Low levels of completion and transfer
Moving thru the Educational Pipeline Problematic:

- Least likely to enroll in pre–K programs
- Disproportionately attend racially segregated, overcrowded, and poorly funded schools
- Limited teacher preparedness and high turnover
- Under–enrolled in rigorous curricular tracks
- Experience limited access to guidance counselors
  - Racial & Economic Influences are REAL!
  - “Institutional Neglect”

“It got to the point where my morale was so low and I cared so little…”

Source: California Department of Education, Data Quest

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The Chicana/o Educational Pipeline

100 Elementary School Students

46 Graduate High School

46

26 Enroll in College

17 Go to a Community College

26

1 Transfers to a 4-year College

8 Graduate w/ a B.A. Degree

9 Go to a 4-year College

17

8

2 Earn a Graduate or Professional Degree

1

8

2

0.2 Graduate w/ a Doctoral Degree

Source: Yosso & Solorzano, 2006
Latina/o California Community College Pipeline

100 Latina/o First-time Freshman

- 8 University of CA
- 75 Community College
- 17 CA State University

7 Transfer

- 1 University of CA
- 6 CA State University

Source: California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2004; Hubert et al., 2006
What is college choice?

- Definition: “[A] complex, multistage process during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, followed later by a decision to attend a specific college, university or institution of advanced vocational training”

Source: Hossler, Braxton & Coopersmith, 1989, p. 234
## College Choice Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predisposition</th>
<th>Search</th>
<th>Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision to attend college</td>
<td>Explore college information</td>
<td>Completes applications and selects a college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinder - 9/10th</td>
<td>11th - Beginning of 12th</td>
<td>12th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler, Braxton & Coopersmith, 1989
El "Este" High School in Los Angeles
- Multi-track high school enrolling over 5000 students
- 98% Latino population

3 academic tracks, each enrolling between 1500–1800 students
- 3 academic counselors per track
  - Roughly 600 students per counselor

1 college counselor
Key Themes

- Strong parental value towards education
- Parental lack of familiarity with the college choice process
- School Resources
- Leaving home
“My parents really see school as very important. For them, if you don’t have an education then you cannot really be anything in life because you have to be educated in this country in order to be successful, in order to be able to survive.”

“I look at her and she has all these calluses on her hands and she looks at me and says, ‘I don’t want this for you, and this is why I’m sacrificing myself because I don’t want this for you and I don’t want this for your children, and I don’t want this for your children’s children.’”
“I tell her, I’m going to apply to this school and that school and she asks, ‘Why so many?’ She doesn’t really see what I’m trying to do, you know, trying to get into as many colleges as I can. She doesn’t really understand all the work that goes into the application process.”

“I don’t think they’re that familiar with it [college choice process]. They know what I tell them. They don’t know much English, so it’s very hard for them to come to orientations, because they’re mostly in English.”
“The school is so huge and unfortunately we don’t have time to deal with everybody in their own little sphere, the way that would be helpful. So in November, if you want to talk about a community college it’s going to be a short speech, because we’re so inundated with the number of kids that we already identified to be eligible to go to a Cal state or a UC or a four year school. Some of those kids are not filling out applications, so we’re banging the walls getting those kids to get in and basically setting the kids who don’t have the A through G aside, knowing that we have a little bit more time for them because the community college application deadline is far into the future.”
Availability of School Resources: Student Perspective

“Because there’s only one counselor for like 3000 students at El Este High School, that’s really hard and no matter how much they try or how late they stay, it’s going to be really difficult to get to all the students and make sure that they are doing everything.”
For my parents, the closer you are from home the better the college is. They don’t want us to leave that far. They want us to go to college but they don’t want us to leave.”

“My mom told me, ‘I don’t want you applying anywhere that’s more than a half an hour away from the house.’ I told her I wanted to apply to San Diego because it looked nice…and she asked me, ‘how are you going to get back and forth everyday?’”
“My older brother says he was the experimental child because he’s the oldest and he had to do everything by himself and he says I’m the left over because I got everything that they [older siblings] didn’t get. So the road to college, was paved for me, and I thank god that I’m the youngest one because I would probably be lost if I wasn’t.”
Research Study

- Target networks—social capital and chain migration
  - Focus on consideration and selection

- 30 Chicana/o Students
  - 10 community college first years
  - 10 university first years
  - 10 transfer students (at four-year university)

- 2 California postsecondary institutions
Key Themes

- Networks heavily influence postsecondary institutions Chicana/o students will consider and select

- Why?
  - Served to circumvent potential challenges
  - Provided students with a sense of fit
  - Provided validation for completion/success
Family Influences

- Jesse, cc– “very supportive people who work[ed] here, such as my uncle and his wife.”

- Ruth, univ– “I have family over there. I have two cousins in the University of Illinois.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sibling</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Relative</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>9</td>
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Family Influences

- Alex, univ.– “If one of my sisters, if she wouldn’t have gone to college, I think most of us [siblings] would not have gone to college or we wouldn’t have followed in her footsteps...If she wouldn’t have done that, being brave and leaving home, nobody else would have done it.”
Peer Influences

- Israel, cc – “It influenced me [to go to the same college] in that they’d [friends] been here, they already know how it is and they were actually telling me first-hand experience of how they dealt with it and how the college has treated them.”

- Joaquin, univ. – “Boston was a choice that I was like ‘Ok they have an engineering school and my girlfriend also wants to go.’”
School Influences

- Cassandra, transfer-
  “…All the [outreach] programs I attended, they would encourage me to apply to a university, so that’s why, I think that’s why I had three different choices where I wanted to go to.”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Alumni</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Teacher</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Counselor</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Coach</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comm College</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC Professor</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC Counselor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Admissions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1) Networks were critical because they circumvented potential challenges
   - Miguel, cc- “Mostly it was my sister that was there and I’d have someone there to help me out with things if I was having any trouble”
   - José, univ. – “There’s a lot of family that I have here in [local area] and if I ever need anything I don’t necessarily have to call my parents. I could just call them [relatives] and just to have some sense of security here being far away from my [immediate] family ”
2) Network contacts provided students with a sense of fit

- Connie, transfer—“I wanted to go to [local university] because that’s where a lot of, quote–unquote, my people would go there or where I would feel more like with the Latino community.”

- Cassandra, transfer—“Most of the students that go there are White…I would just think in my head, ‘No, I’m not going to fit in there,’ and so I thought, ‘maybe I should go to [local university], there’s a lot of Latinos there and most of my friends go there.’”
Why?

3) Network contacts provided students with a sense of validation and potential success
   ◦ Concha, univ.– “It’s really encouraging to see that they were actually doing it coming from the background that I was in, am in.”
Middle and High Schools must:
- Engage and inform families about the college choice process
- Support and foster higher education opportunities for students
- Create peer college counseling programs
- Address effects of racial and socioeconomic segregation
- Move away from “subtracting schooling”

Unequal K–12 preparation opportunities
- “wasting aspirations”

More than just entry into higher education
- Linking access and success
- Fund/enhance ethnic/cultural/religious centers – key to persistence
- Outreach programs work!

College Success
- “lost opportunities”
- Post–collegiate opportunities denied
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