ISSUES OF CONCERN WITH LATINO STUDENTS IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of
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Master of Science in Education

By
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the issues and concerns that were present with Latino students in a community college. The desired outcome was to identify the problems or barriers Latino students faced while in college and to come up with possible recommendations to the academic counseling staff and other educators in order to better meet the students’ needs.

The study focused on the concerns and goals of four Latino students (two males and two females), who were interviewed in depth in order to gain a more accurate assessment of their concerns. The interviews were held at Chabot College, Hayward, during the Spring Quarter of 1991. There were 22 questions on a questionnaire they filled out prior to the interviews. These were answered by the participants where they identified some of their main concerns: (a) All four students agreed on one thing, the fear they felt that they would have to forego their educational goals due to financial reasons. (b) The females in this study felt a feeling of isolation and appeared to be a major concern for them, however, it was absent in the males. (c) The students did not feel that Chabot offered adequate services to Latino students, although they admitted being unfamiliar with the availability of services in general.
The compiled data from the interviews indicated an interest by the participants of this study in hopes that it would help future Latino students at Chabot College in their educational endeavors.

Recommendations included acquiring additional Latino instructors, counselors and administrators; increasing the degree of mentoring; offering a multi-cultural curriculum for students; and forming research networks with peers to study areas of interest to the Latino population.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

It has been reported that the social, as well as the economic cost of unemployment or underemployment has hit the Latino population much harder than other groups of people mostly due to the lack of education. In 1989, it was reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce that Hispanics males had a higher labor force participation rate (80.1%) than non-Hispanics (74.4%); however, Hispanic males had a higher unemployment rate than their counterparts. Furthermore, the median earning of Hispanic males ($13,599) were less than two thirds of the non-Hispanic median ($21,267) (American Council on Education, 1991).

From the same publication, it was noted that Hispanic women didn’t fare much better. First of all, there is lower participation in the labor force by Hispanic women when compared to non-Hispanic women (52.4 percent versus 57.0 percent respectively). This can be speculated that Hispanic women have, generally, a more traditional-type role in the family than their counterparts; therefore, they are more likely to stay at home while raising young children. Unfortunately, when it comes to income, both groups of women
fare much lower on the payscale than their male counterparts. For instance, the median income for both groups of women is much less than it is for the males ($11,245 for non-Hispanic women and $9,188 for Hispanic women). Thus, research has shown that unemployment and underemployment is among one of the issues most commonly associated with lack of skills or having a limited education.

According to a report by the Tomas Rivera Center (1993), five out of every six Latino children now enrolled in public elementary schools will be old enough to graduate from high school in the first decade of the 21st century. As adults, these Latinos will participate in the work force beyond the year 2040. Latinos constitute a vital, ever-increasing segment of the labor market, the labor market that will play a central role in determining whether America remains competitive in the new world economy. Assuring that Latino children now enrolled in school fulfill their educational and intellectual potential is in the interest of all Americans (Pachon, 1993, in Tomas Rivera Center report).

The education of the Latino being the main focus of this study recognizes that the projected growth of the Latino population make educating their children an urgent national concern. However, educating the masses doesn’t end with the graduation from high school. There is a dire need to further educate young Latinos and continue their
to further educate young Latinos and continue their education to postsecondary schools. Since many of the Latino students make the community college their next step, this thesis will look into such area and find out the concerns of a small group of Latino students.

Therefore, the desired outcome of this study was to identify the concerns Latino students faced while in a community college and to come up with possible recommendations for academic counselors in the setting in which they function. The study will concentrate on the concerns and goals of the students in order to gain a more accurate assessment of the needs and concerns of the Latino student in a community college environment.

Background

Results from the 1990 Census confirm that California's ethnic diversity is increasing. Between 1980 and 1990, the state's Hispanic population increased almost 70 percent. According to the 1990 Census, California's ethnic composition was 57% White, 26% Hispanic, 9% Asian and Pacific Islander, 7% Black, and 1% American Indian and Other (The California State Census Data Center Newsletter, 1991).

The Hispanic population is one of the largest and fastest growing minority groups in the United States. Because of a higher birth rate, a rising immigration, and a young median population, Hispanics contribute significantly
most likely will continue into the future (Arias, 1986). Hispanics are also the youngest of all racial/ethnic groups in the country. (One striking difference exists among the Hispanic subgroups, Mexican-Americans have the youngest median age, 23.6 years.) This high growth rate and sizable population total increase the urgency for effective responses to their educational needs (American Council on Education, 1991).

Although Hispanics contribute almost one-third of K-12 students in California and Texas, educational progress has not paralleled this growth. It had been expected by many that this growth would translate into greater political and economic power, thereby increasing education mobility. However, the last decade has seen a decline in the political participation of Hispanics (U.S. Department of Commerce, undated in Gandara, 1986).

Definitions of Terms

According to the American Council on Education (1991), the term "Hispanic" was first used in 1972 in the data collected for the Bureau of the Census to describe people of Spanish origin and descent, including Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans and people from Central and South America. Since then, numerous other terms have been used, often as a preference of the writer or the audience he/she is addressing. Since there is no consensus on the
correct term to use, one can expect to see a variety of terms used. This is often confusing to the reader who is not aware of the difference in the connotation that a particular term might have to the various groups it represents.

For the purpose of this thesis, "Latino" will be the term more readily used to describe the participants in this study since it is a term that is widely accepted by most people without taking offense to it. Hispanic, although widely used in the media, will be used sparingly throughout this report along with Mexican-American. "Chicano" is another term often used, mostly in earlier research, and it will be used when a particular study uses that term.

All Hispanics or Latinos share one thing which is the Spanish language. They may even share some of the same problems; however, each group has its own unique set of problems which cannot be individually included in this study. Quite often, people tend to generalize all of the Latin American populations as one group, not realizing that each individual country is separate, has its own culture as well as its own history, and could be radically different than the other countries which surrounds it.
Significance of the Problem

Although Hispanics are characterized by a substantially younger age distribution than the general population and are highly concentrated among the school-age population, they are less likely than their non-Hispanic peers to have been enrolled in preschool programs or to go on to secondary and postsecondary education (Carter and Wilson, 1990). A similar sentiment is repeated in a study by the American Council on Education (1990) where it states that at every step of the educational ladder, Hispanics are grossly underrepresented and the degree of underrepresentation increases at each successive level.

Research has shown that of all the Hispanic students that pursue a post-secondary education in California, most of them start with a community college. Unfortunately, most of them also end their post-secondary experience there without receiving a degree or transferring to a four-year institution (Cepeda as referred in Gandara 1986; Orfield, 1986). Since community colleges are open-access institutions, virtually anyone can attend for whatever reason and generally few of the students complete
programs (Cohen, 1990). Furthermore, most community colleges attract a high number of minorities because of the low expense and the accessibility to less academically able students. These colleges attract mostly students with short-term practical goals such as to upgrade their current job skills or to gain job-entry skills (Cohen, 1990). Also, many of the community college students attend on a part-time basis for a variety of reasons which often prevents them from carrying a bigger course load. Other students may enroll in a community college for a class or two to improve their skills and then stop. This situation makes community college students take longer to attain their goals, consequently decreasing their lifetime earning potential.

When it comes to Latino students going to graduate or post-graduate education, the problems seem to get worse. Some of the obstacles to higher education that minority students encounter include the fear of acquiring huge debts, but most important, a sense of isolation the higher one goes up the educational ladder (S.F. Chronicle, December 13, 1991). Many minorities feel a sense of isolation when they are the only minority in their graduate and post-graduate classes. They often face unusual pressure from their families, many of whom do not understand the concept of a higher degree.

Ponce and Atkinson (1989) noted that although Hispanic college students struggle with concerns similar to
other students, they also face additional burdens because of their economic, social and ethnic background. It was also reported that five of the most frequent concerns pertinent to Hispanic students were: (a) adjustment to college; (b) academic performance; (c) financial concerns; (d) feelings of loneliness and isolation; and (e) feelings of alienation or not belonging.

The problem of dropping out, retention, and transferring among Latino youth is consistently worse than that of other ethnic groups. In a survey conducted in 1990 by a group of educators (Hurtado et al.) at a local community college in Fremont, California, it was found that Mexican-Americans fell below average in retention rates with a similar drop-out pattern that is generally found statewide. The severity of the problem cannot be ignored locally since it extends into the bigger picture nationally.

With that in mind, this study attempts to provide some insight into this critical problem, present some ideas, and identify areas for further research to ensure that Latino students do not get neglected or forgotten in the educational process. The questionnaire used in this thesis will cover several important issues in order to provide some clues as to what Latino students are faced with on their journey to higher education.
The Undereducation of the Latino

The nation's conservative mood of the 1980s attributed to a general decline in both educational research support and also in serious investigations of the condition of minority students, especially the Latino (Orfield, 1986; Ponterotto, 1988; Keller, 1990). The implication is that we know less about the challenges facing our schools and colleges and the education of the Hispanic community. There is also a special concern about the fact that so few Latinos get the education they need in order to compete with the rest of the non-Hispanic population.

The undereducated person faces many economic as well as social problems. The educational attainment of Hispanics lags far behind that of the population as a whole at all levels of schooling. Furthermore, the educational condition of Hispanics has been characterized by below grade-level enrollment, high attrition rates, high rates of illiteracy, low number of school years completed and great underrepresentation in higher education (Arias, 1986). The expansion of this population and the evidence of their widespread educational problems is likely to be seen as among one of the more critical developments of our time (Orfield, 1986).

By almost any measure, Hispanics are the most undereducated group of Americans, next to Native Americans (Arias, 1986). In California, 21 percent of non-Hispanic
whites have at least a B.A. degree whereas only 6 percent of Mexican-Americans have that same degree. While a higher percentage of Hispanics are graduating from high school (51.9 percent in 1972 versus 60.1 percent in 1984), the nationwide percentage of Hispanics enrolling in post-secondary school has declined during the same period (Gandara, 1986). Although there are more students graduating from high school, approximately 40 percent of all Hispanics who begin school do not graduate (U.S. Bureau of Statistics, 1985 in Gandara, 1986). Therefore, for every 10 Hispanic 18-year-old that enters high school, only two of them will complete high school and pursue any post-secondary education. Two years later, one of these two will have dropped out (Lee, 1985 in Gandara, 1986).

On a more positive note, nationwide, Hispanic college participation rates for women have increased and have almost reached parity with Hispanic men. The increase in the college participation rates of Hispanic women is a reflection of the same factors increasing the college participation of all women (American Council on Education, 1991). Another look at the brighter side, the percentage of Latinos who enroll in graduate programs compared favorably to percentages of graduate enrollment for all students (California Post-Secondary Education Commission, 1985a in Gandara, 1986). However, since so few of these students actually graduate from college, only approximately two
students in 100 will eventually complete a graduate degree of some kind (Commission on Higher Education of Minorities 1982, California Post-Secondary Commission 1985b in Gandara 1986). A Ph.D. is a degree that is seldom pursued by Hispanics. In 1989, the total number of Doctorate Degrees awarded nationally to White students was 23,112 in comparison to a total of 1,041 degrees awarded to Hispanics (American Council on Education, 1991).

Recognizing the important role that higher education plays in a person's life is something that has to be stressed. In order for the Latino population to get into the skilled workforce along with the rest of the population, there is a great need to get the necessary education to avoid lagging behind in future generations.

The data presented illustrates that reform has yet to address the unequal context that American schools offer the Hispanic students (Arias, 1986). In a study by Gandara (1985), a theory first noted by Chiswick (1980) and later supported by McCarthy and Valdez (1985), stated that the failure of Chicanos to progress up the economic ladder at the same rate as other immigrants, even after several generations, was due to the fact that Chicanos have a low participation rate in post-secondary education. Therefore, many of the problems the Chicano faces lead back to education and the impact it has on other aspects of a person's life.
It was projected that by the year 2050, the U.S. population will be half minorities. In 1991, the majority of public school students in the state belonged to minority groups, with the largest portion being Latinos (S.F. Chronicle, December 4, 1992). Already more than 50 percent of the students in the first three grades of California's schools belong to a racial and ethnic minority. These youths will need to be educated into the economic mainstream and schools and universities must face the challenge of the next century (Gandara, 1986). There is a significant need for Latinos to attain a higher educational level and for the educational institutions to focus their attention on this population and their needs.

Orfield (1986) senses that it is customary in the development of U.S. policies toward minority communities to let the problems accumulate until a crisis occurs or a major social or political movement emerges. Waiting for such a crisis would be tragic for the nation to respond this way to the educational needs of Latinos or any other minority group. The Latino community needs education, contrary to the stereotype, they value education very highly, and they benefit greatly when they obtain it. However, they often find themselves increasingly cut-off from educational opportunities by facing obstacles that impedes their progress.

It was important to do this study because of the
severity of this problem and the large population it affects. It is clear that there is a tremendous need for Latinos to get better educated and further their education. One cannot over-emphasize the importance of a well-rounded post secondary education for all people, not only for one's own betterment but also because society will benefit from a well educated populace. Educators as well as policymakers need to recognize the gravity of this problem and address the issue to improve the educational status of the Latino.

There are several interpretations of the unfavorable condition of the Hispanic student in the educational system. One of the interpretations is that the achievement of Hispanic children is largely due to the socioeconomic status of the family (Ortiz, 1986; Espinosa and Ochoa, 1986). It was found that the socioeconomic level of the student is one of the most significant variables affecting school average achievement scores. However, there are many other variables that have to be taken into account before interpreting specific data when referring to the success or failure of the Latino student in the educational system.

Another factor in the achievement of the Latino student is seen in the distribution of parental education. Ortiz (1986) found that among Latino students there was a lower percentage of parents with a college education and a higher percentage of parents who were not high school
graduates, thus making this a very serious intergenerational problem. However, it should be noted that there was no distinction between recent immigrants and older generations and the possibility that some parents or students were recent immigrants.

The issue of segregation among the Latino was evident in some of the research. According to Orfield (1990), minorities, in particular Latinos, often suffer deep academic damage because they attend schools that are usually less than desirable. Often, because of their race or economic status, they are forced to live in areas where there is inadequate instruction and counseling and they find themselves lost in the educational maze without being able to find the necessary resources often found in better schools. The idea of attending college is something that is often considered foreign to them and without the necessary support from teachers and family, many of these students do not see many reasons to continue their education.

In addition, Espinosa and Ochoa (1986), found that California Latino students are highly concentrated in segregated schools where the average achievement level is lower than in schools attended by white students. The authors concluded their study by warning that if this trend of isolation continues, educational inequality will continue to deny talented Latino students the opportunity to equal preparation for college.
Much of the research done on the Latino population points to the significant need for them to attain a higher educational level and for the educational institutions to focus their attention on this population and their needs. Their rapid growth also highlights the urgent need to increase the number of educators and administrators as well as researchers and other professionals, in all areas of the educational system to improve the existing conditions.

**Counseling the Latino Student**

"Counselor" used in the context of this study refers, specifically, to an academic counselor most commonly found in a community college versus a counselor found in a clinical setting working with patients. The importance of the counselor to the community college student is crucial since that is where many students decide whether they are going to transfer to a university or not. Having the guidance of a counselor, especially for a minority student, can often mean the difference between staying on track and taking the necessary courses to obtain a degree or dropping out of school altogether.

Ruiz and Padilla (1977), one of the earlier studies done on Latino students, stressed the importance of a counselor being knowledgeable with Latino ethnohistory and culture, if not in language, when working with Latinos. More importantly, it was noted that in comparison with other
ethnic groups, Latino students lacked role models "to imitate (someone) who had achieved success through continued education". However, it is assumed that there has been more role models for young Latinos since that particular study was done to show the importance of higher education.

It was hypothesized by Ponce and Atkinson (1989) that subject acculturation would interact with both counselor ethnicity and counseling style in such a way that unacculturated subjects would prefer a Mexican-American counselor who used a directive counseling style, whereas acculturated clients would have no preference for either counselor ethnicity or counseling style. They found no evidence of an acculturation effect for any dependent variable. However, the subjects were more willing to see a counselor who was Mexican-American for personal, academic, and vocational concerns. Also, they preferred the directive counseling style rather than the nondirective counseling style.

Findings by Atkinson, Poston, Furlong, and Mercado (1989) reported that ethnicity played a smaller role in the preferences that individuals have for counselor characteristics in the ethnic groups they studied. The groups studied were Asian-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Caucasian students. All three groups strongly preferred a counselor who had similar attitudes, similar personality, had more education, and was older than the respondent, more
so than the ethnicity of the counselor. When data from this study were compared to those from an earlier study with African-Americans, some discrepancy was found with regards to preference for sex of counselor. African-Americans expressed a greater preference for an opposite sex counselor, whereas the reverse was true for Asian-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Caucasians in this particular study.

The results of both studies suggest that preference for an ethnically similar counselor may be less important to subjects than their preferences for other counselor characteristics. However, when given a choice between an ethnically similar or ethnically dissimilar counselor, subjects in all four ethnic groups fairly consistently expressed a preference for an ethnically similar counselor (Atkinson, Poston, Furlong, Mercado, 1989).

Recent surveys and studies have concluded that most people prefer a counselor of similar ethnicity when given a choice (Ponce et al. 1989). However, people would choose a counselor of similar attitudes, similar personality, and similar background to their own, over choosing someone on ethnicity alone. The results reflect group averages and not individual references, therefore a conclusion that all Mexican-Americans prefer an ethnically similar counselor or a directive counseling style would be misleading.

An important point made by Ponce and Atkinson (1989) is that neither a preference for counseling style nor
a preference for counselor ethnicity have yet been linked to counseling outcome. What is more important is that counselors are aware of the differences in people and that they learn to deal with those differences.

The availability of culturally similar or culturally sensitive counselors are an important determinant of counseling services utilization for some students who most closely identify themselves with their ethnic culture (Atkinson, Jennings, Liongson, 1990). Often minority students underutilize college counseling services (Fager, 1973; Sue, 1973; Sue & Sue, 1973; in Atkinson et al., 1990). Several explanations were offered including the use of alternative sources such as family or friends and also the unavailability or lack of services.

Minority students need the necessary support services just as much as they need counselors that will understand them. Therefore, as ethnic populations continue to expand, there is a strong need for supporting cross-cultural counseling training in the training of academic counselors as well as providing services that value and respect cultural diversity.

Given the information just cited, it was important to do this study because of the implications of the research and theories that surround the Latino student population. This research touched on two main areas: (1) the low participation rate in post-secondary education; and (2) the
additional burdens the Latino college student faces because of his/her economic, social, and ethnic background.

It was evident that there is a tremendous need for Latinos not just to get better educated and further their education, but also to utilize all the available resources such as counseling services, to help them through with their schooling. In addition, educational institutions need to address all the different issues facing the Latino student if he/she is expected to succeed in this society.

Future Outlook for Latinos in Education

Current trends in education point to several different paths in dealing with the minority student population, including special programs such as outreach programs for students in high school in cooperation with local colleges and universities. Through the concerted efforts of schools and universities, these programs are intended to guide students and to show them what is needed in order to go to college. Many Latino students lack the basic information about the college and university system and are not aware of the courses needed to earn a college degree (S.F. Chronicle, Aug. 1, 1989). They often do not know the correct classes to take while in high school, do not know how to apply for financial aid, and do not know where to start.

The Puente Project founded in 1981 by an English
teacher and a counselor at Chabot College, is another way in which educators are helping Latino students succeed in college. It is a writing/counseling/mentoring program for Latino students to increase the number of students transferring to four-year colleges and universities. It became so successful that it was taken statewide to other community colleges and it is still in existence. This program is a one-year commitment which teams counselors and English teachers and links the students with mentors in the Latino community to help students reach their academic and career goals.

According to a report by the U.C. Latino Eligibility Task Force (1993), two-thirds of the Puente Project students become eligible to transfer and they transfer at a greater rate than other Latino students, although the number is still very small. Nevertheless, the results of this program have been extremely successful in transferring more Latino students into four-year institutions. Normally, only three percent of Latino students who earn a community college degree transfer to a four-year college, whereas students in the Puente Project have a 26 percent transfer rate (S.F. Chronicle, Aug. 1, 1989). The fact is, these students were better prepared because they received guidance from a core group of people who together contributed to their overall success.

Another avenue to combat this problem is the
specialized post-secondary schools with an emphasis on a particular culture, such as the African-American or the Hispanic culture. This approach is not new since it has been in operation for a considerable number of years. For over 125 years, the historically Black Colleges have provided higher education access for a majority of African-Americans (Wilson, 1990). These are private universities throughout the country that focus on the specific needs of minority students. Such universities have adopted the key elements of the education concept which was developed to provide students with role models, support systems, and high expectations.

Although the original concept was designed for the African-American student, the same idea has been used in other universities for other minorities as well. As an example, the National Hispanic University in Oakland, California, founded in 1981, had to expand to meet the increased demand of educating the Latino population in the Bay Area. And because of that demand, an additional Hispanic University was opened in San Jose seven years later (National Hispanic University, 1990).

Although anyone can attend these colleges and universities, the emphasis is on the African-American or Latino background, respectively. Non-minority students who attend these universities can receive a multicultural perspective along with the academic education of other
universities and colleges. According to a promotional advertisement from the National Hispanic University, it is stated that its primary mission is "to provide higher education programs for Hispanics and other individuals who seek a multi-cultural educational experience".

This type of university is essential for the student, that for whatever reason, has not been successful in reaching the academic education in the traditional universities. Often, students will feel it was because they didn't see anyone as a role model in the university's staff (such was with Subject A from the interviews presented); others would feel isolated because of the absence of other Latino students (such in the case of Subject B in the study). This is generally typical of Latino students since often they are the first ones in their immediate family to be exposed to a college environment. Most of them do not have the support system at home because their parents did not have the opportunity, in some cases to get past elementary school, let alone high school. Thus, the students have a very difficult time in dealing with the pressures of college life and they need the extra support not just from their teachers but also from their peers.

Some African-American educators suggest that what is needed to solve the problem of declining African-American access to college is not civil rights pressure on White institutions but more resources for the nearly 100
traditionally African-American colleges (Orfield, 1990). Although this type of institution is not always considered the best alternative in solving the problem of better access or higher completion rate of students, a similar strategy could be applied in educating the Latino student. They normally enroll a small share of students, and most states do not have this type of institution. Furthermore, these universities are often criticized as promoting segregation, which would be considered unconstitutional if their policy had an explicit goal of segregating students (Orfield, 1990).

Regardless of what some people or policymakers may say about this type of university, educators and administrators from such universities believe that their students graduate with more confidence, pride and motivation. In Wilson's article (1990), it was stated that in these institutions, African-American students were more likely to complete their undergraduate degrees and African-American women graduates initially had superior earnings that their African-American counterpart graduates of White institutions. It concluded that the more supportive and nurturing environment of the African-American colleges contributed to the greater on-time degree completion of their students.

Whichever view one takes with this type of education, one of the advantages for the minority student is
clear: a student who graduates from a non-traditional university can serve as a role model not only to others who could not succeed in a traditional university, but can also be seen as an asset to society instead of a failure. With the increase of minorities in the American population, the education of all students is extremely important if we are to succeed in the world economy as a unified society.

Summary

It was documented in the literature review that Latino students were underrepresented at every step of the educational ladder and that they faced additional obstacles, especially going through higher education. Some of the obstacles included a sense of isolation or not belonging, financial concerns, and pressure from their families.

The educational condition of Latinos has been characterized by having high attrition rates and high rates of illiteracy along with a low number of school years completed in higher education. The expansion of this population and the evidence of their widespread educational problems was seen to some researchers as being very critical.

Recognizing the severity of this problem, it was important to do additional research on a local level by focusing on a small number of Latino students attending a community college to investigate their concerns.
In counseling the Latino student, researchers found that they were more willing to see a counselor who was of Latino descent and also preferred the directive style versus the nondirective counseling style. It was also found that some minority students often underutilized college counseling services.

The future in education for Latinos will likely continue to include outreach and special programs although at a much earlier age to get young minds thinking about college. It will also include the exposure of positive role models as early as the preschool and elementary school levels. By reaching young children early on, they can look toward a brighter, more defined road ahead of them in high school which can lead them to higher education and a more successful life in their adult lives.
CHAPTER III
DESIGNS AND PROCEDURES

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to investigate the issues and concerns with Latino students in a local community college. The desired outcome was to identify the problems or barriers Latino students faced while in college and to come up with possible recommendations to the academic counseling staff and other educators in order to better meet the students' needs.

Some of the concerns the students voiced were divided among the sexes, however, there was a general consensus in two areas: (a) the fear of dropping out of school because of financial reasons; and (b) the feeling that Chabot College could offer better support services (such as childcare and health services) not only for the Latino student, but for other students. The feeling of isolation was a major concern for the females but not necessarily for the males.

Research Questions

There were 22 questions presented to four Latino students attending Chabot College, a local community
college. The questions were in the form of a questionnaire and consisted of four main sections. An individual interview was later conducted with each student to complement the questionnaire and complete the study. **Section 1** - Requesting information about their educational goals and reasons for attending college; asked them if other members in their families had attended college; and the type of job they would like to have once they have reached their specific goals. **Section 2** - Dealing with their current academic counselor; how often they saw him/her; how they rated him/her; they were asked whether they preferred a Latino counselor or not; and whom they turned to when they were faced with a problem. **Section 3** - Asking the students about their concerns experienced in college; they rated the services offered to Latino students at Chabot and areas where they would like to see some improvement. **Section 4** - Requesting demographic information such as age, gender, marital status, parents' occupation, living arrangements, number of siblings, and educational level. **General Methodology**

The population sampled for this study was that of four Chabot College students, two males and two females. The students were currently enrolled at Chabot during the Spring Quarter of 1991 when this study was conducted. As a group,
they ranged from their early 20s to early 40s. With respect to their class standing, two students had completed between 37-72 quarter units, one student had over 73 units, and one had already received his AA degree. The subjects were selected from a group of students I met while doing an internship at the Student Achievement Center at Chabot College. The center was used by students under the Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS), where a student could get tutoring in the subjects that he/she needed. The students were selected by the author of this study mainly for the accessibility and the different levels that each student had achieved on his/her educational endeavor. However, more importantly, the students were chosen because they were representative of a small cross-section of the Latino population at Chabot College. The study will focus on the concerns and specific goals of the four students interviewed in order to gain a more accurate assessment of the concerns and needs of the Latino student while attending Chabot College.

**Population Sample**

Each subject was presented with the questionnaire which was completed on his/her own time. After the instrument was returned completed, individual sessions were held with each of the students. The subjects were encouraged to speak candidly about their impressions of the
investigation. Discussion and responses particular to each individual was recorded by the author of the study after each discussion was completed. Notes from the free-form inquiry sessions were analyzed for consistent themes, and insights collected from these sessions were used to assess overall responses.

The interviews were held at the Student Achievement Center at each student’s requested time. The answers to the questionnaire were found to be very honest and complete since the students and I shared a mutual rapport with each other, and they felt the study was worthwhile for them and others.

Each individual interview was conducted over a period of approximately one hour, often slightly longer with some of the students. The interviewees showed a genuine interest in the study and were very cooperative in answering the questions as thoroughly as possible. They were also very willing to give additional information if requested thus giving me a better insight on their responses.

Instrumentation

The materials used for this interview was mainly the use of a questionnaire created by the author of this study. The 22 questions covered such areas as future goals, problems or concerns they faced while at Chabot, and services that were needed, if any. The questionnaire was
followed by an individual interview of each student to clarify any problem, and more importantly, to find out more in-depth information that the questionnaire alone could not provide.

All the questions on the questionnaire were first presented to a group of graduate students in a thesis seminar at California State University, Hayward, during the Fall Quarter of 1990. After some revisions, the questionnaire was given out again as a pilot test to four other people at Chabot College (two were current students not included in the study, and the other two were non-students). An information sheet, along with a consent form, was attached to the final questionnaire before being distributed to the four students who later participated in this study.
Interview Findings

The study comprised of four students attending Chabot College who were chosen not only because of the different levels they represented age-wise and educational-wise, but also because of their accessibility. The participants will be described as being:

Subject A - Female, age: early 40s.
Subject B - Female, age: early 30s.
Subject C - Male, age: middle 20s.
Subject D - Male, age: early 20s.

Both females were single-parents with children living with them, while both males were single living at home with their parents. As mentioned, each subject was at a different stage of his/her educational goal, and together they represented a small cross-section of the general Latino population at Chabot College.

The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions and the interview followed the questionnaire, allowing the students to elaborate on their answers and to feel free to discuss any question at length. The participants gave more in-depth information during the interview that the questionnaire did
not allow. Overall, the information gathered at the interview proved to be very valuable in putting this research together since it gave me the opportunity to look at the individual as a person and not just a subject participating in a study.

Among other findings, the study revealed the following: In addition to the feelings of isolation, particularly with the women students, occasionally the students found themselves overburdened with several tasks at once. The conflict between family and scholarly pursuits was further exasperated by the academic environment where the students felt there was not enough support for them. The women especially, felt they did not have enough support from the family system since they were the first ones in their immediate families to attend college and family members did not understand what they were going through. The two women interviewed were single parents making it more difficult for them to attend college. Understandably, they felt they did not have enough time for themselves or their families. Women in traditional families such as the Latino family, often have the responsibility of taking care of the children and the domestic duties while the males deal more with work outside of the home, therefore it is not surprising that the family support was not there for the women.

The following responses were cited as being the most
important reason for these students in getting a college education. The response which came in first place was the reason that stated: "to pursue a personal goal and study a particular area of interest", with two students responding to that answer. The next reason was tied with the responses of: "to get recognized and gain prestige", and the response of: "to get a good-paying job and make money". Interestingly, the response that came in third place of importance was: "to make my parents (or children) proud of me and to please them", showing how important the family is regarded in the Latino family. The women also felt that they were providing role models for their children. By seeing their mothers going back to school, the children took their education more seriously.

It was evident that going back to college gave the women in this study the self-esteem they desired. They not only felt more confident in themselves but they also felt the satisfaction of accomplishing something that was unheard of in their families. Prior to attending college, both women were experiencing a void in their personal lives. They were both unhappy in their previous jobs, one being an unskilled worker, and the other one a homemaker. Attending college provided them with the opportunity and personal satisfaction they lacked in their lives.

The highest educational goal expected to reach for one of the women was a Masters degree, while the other one
was presently aiming at receiving an AA degree and possibly going for a BA at a later time when her children are older. The first woman, subject A, was older and she knew exactly where she was headed; she wanted to study the field of Gerontology. The second woman, subject B, had younger children and was not sure yet but felt that she would like to continue her education and possibly attend a university to pursue a career in Child Welfare sometime in the future.

The males in this study felt very confident in reaching their educational goals, one aiming at a Masters degree, possibly in Business, the other one was aiming at receiving a Doctorate degree or a law degree. The difference between their aspirations and the women's was obvious. Both males had gone to a private school where college was emphasized through their high school years and were encouraged by their teachers. In one case, the male, subject C, was expected to attend college since he had older siblings who were or had been in college already. The women, on the other hand, did not have anyone in their families even consider the possibility of them attending college, therefore they lacked the confidence that the males exhibited.

One of the major concerns these students faced was the possibility of not reaching their educational goals because of financial reasons. Three of the four students felt that money could be a problem for them in the future.
One of the women also stated her children’s needs as being a main concern which could interfere with her educational goals.

The reasons for wanting to attend college and how it came about also varied between the sexes. The two men in this study, were geared into the college preparatory direction during high school by teachers and family members. The two women had very different responses. One of them, subject A, experienced a work-related accident where she went through a rehabilitation program which made her realize she was not going to be able to return to her old job. Since the accident left her incapacitated for over a year, she went into a very deep depression state and came to the realization that she needed to go back to school if she wanted to do something with her life. The second woman, subject B, had been raising two young children and was not feeling personally satisfied. She decided it was time for her to do something more; in her words, “something I could be proud of besides raising kids”.

In dealing with their academic counselors and what the students thought of their counselor and the school’s services, the responses were nearly identical. Their response was that their counselor was always helpful, although three out of the four students saw their counselor only once a quarter when they needed a signature for enrolling the following quarter or to inquire about the
classes they needed. On their preference of whether the counselor was Latino or not, the males responded that it didn’t matter while the females answered that they preferred a Latino counselor.

On rating the services available at Chabot College, half of the students felt that they were bad and needed improvement while the other half responded they were unsure of the services available. Areas that they would like to see improvement included making more financial help available, providing childcare and health services, improving the academic and personal counseling services, providing cultural programs, such as Latino speakers and offering more ethnic classes in the curriculum.

When there was a need to discuss personal problems, three of the students said they went to a friend. Surprisingly, one of the women (subject B) answered that she did not discuss her problems with anyone and that she worked out the problems by herself. It was unexpected to hear that response from either woman, but after talking to her more in depth, I began to understand her response. Through my own personal observation, I felt that she was withdrawn and had many problems with the issue of trust.

The living arrangements of the students, once again, were divided between the sexes. The males (in their 20s) lived at home with their parents, while the women (over 30) lived with their children. The family size of each
participant was typical of most Latino families. Three of the subjects came from a family of seven while one of them came from a family of four. All of the students came from families where the father was a blue-collar worker and the mother was usually a homemaker.

**Interpretations**

One of the most striking findings of this study was the differences noticed between the sexes, not only in the attitudes and concerns the students experienced in community college, but perhaps in life in general. There was a difference of approximately 10 years in the ages between the males and the females. Therefore, the females had more life experience including the experience of raising a family, whereas the males were faced with less responsibility being single.

Overall, the interpretations resulting from doing this study was the possibility that Latino women were raised differently than men, having more traditional roles imposed on them early on. That particular statement could be made of women and men in general, however, it is probably more prevalent in people of other cultures. Other interpretations of the some of the more significant questions included the following:

a) The feeling of isolation experienced by the women can be understood by the many demands imposed on them
from their families and not getting the necessary support they need. There are many older students attending community colleges and many of them have young children who need care while the parent is at school. One possible solution to this problem is to have support groups and other activities for single parents who are attending college. By having affordable on-site childcare available, students will have one less thing to worry about and will make it easier for them to continue their studies.

b) The educational goals the students expressed, for the most part, were quite high and they felt the confidence of being able to reach them; however, they were also very concerned about the financial aspect of their endeavors. With the current rise in educational costs and the reduction of financial aid available, the students had a valid concern. An option for students in need of financial aid is providing certain programs where they could participate either while still in school or after receiving their degrees. There seems to be a tremendous need for more opportunities for students, particularly first-generation college students, who want to continue their education but find it extremely difficult when there is a gross lack of funds available to them.

c) The aspirations of the students were noticeably different between the sexes due largely to the contrast of the upbringing experienced by these students. In this
particular case, the women experienced a much different background than the men which would undoubtedly have an effect on their future goals. Some speculations may point to the cultural aspect of this study; however, it may also be the way in which males and females, in general, are raised and how parents often have different expectations for their daughters than they do for their sons.

d) The role of the academic counselors at Chabot College were not seen as being as important in the students' academic career as expected. Although most of the students felt their counselors were helpful, they were not very enthusiastic about them. Some only saw them when they had to obtain a signature, and most of them did not approach them for any solid counseling.

In the experience of the interviewer, most students do not see their counselors as someone that can help them plan their educational careers since for most of them, a community college is just a stepping stone to their final destination. Often students do not realize that making the right choice while in community college can help them tremendously when they arrive at a four-year institution and that counselors can help them arrive better prepared. Some students may feel that their counselor is not going to give them the time they need so they don't see one unless they have a problem or need a signature.

The role of a community college is changing and more
students are attending to further their education not so much to learn a vocation or trade as it was in the past. Consequently, the role of the counselor also needs to change to keep up with the current trends. It is a much more complicated job when one has to check all the options available not just follow a set of required classes for a specific trade and the counselor can make that job easier for the student. Community college counselors need to take a more active role in helping students with their educational goals, even if community college is just a stepping stone for some of them. However, that stepping stone can be the most important step a student can take toward his/her future.

**Recommendations**

Following are some recommendations primarily aimed at educators at all levels of the educational system.

1) Have more Latino teachers, counselors, and administrators in schools at all levels in order for students to have positive role models and be exposed to an array of Latino professionals. This way they can see people like themselves in various occupations and can get students thinking of the many possible career opportunities available to them.

2) Increase the degree of mentoring for younger Latinos well before entering junior high school and begin to
develop career aspirations in them as early as the elementary school level. Again, as in previous recommendation, expose students to different occupations where they see others like themselves doing important jobs.

3) Offer a multi-cultural curriculum for students in order for them to better understand their culture and other cultures. This in turn will give them a better understanding of themselves and others in the world. Living in California, one of the most diverse states in the nation, makes it much easier for people to see the importance of learning about other cultures. There is a great need for all of us to learn more about each other and to be able to get along with people of different backgrounds because ultimately it will benefit everyone.

4) Form research partnerships or networks with peers to study areas of interest to the Latino population. There is much research needed in many areas related to the Latino population and should not be disregarded since many times a problem may manifest itself in a variety of ways if it gets ignored for a long period of time. It would be foolish for all to pretend that there are no immediate needs in this particular area and wait for something to happen until someone sees that there was indeed a particular problem that was being overlooked or ignored.
Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to address some of the issues and concerns that were present with Latino students in a community college. The desired outcome was to identify the problems or obstacles Latino students faced while in college and to come up with possible recommendations to the academic counseling staff and other educators in order to meet the students' needs better in the future.

A review of the literature demonstrated the need for further research about Latinos as they enter the institution of higher education and attempt to pursue a professional career. A look at current demographics showed the magnitude of the problem in relation to the number of people we were referring to in this study, making it a very serious situation if it is ignored. The Latino population is worth studying since it is growing at one of the fastest rates of any racial or ethnic group, yet its educational attainment remains among the lowest.

The lack of a formal education was seen as one of the main reasons people do not succeed in society. It's been blamed as being the root of many societal problems including such things as unemployment and poverty among
others. According to much of the literature, a familiar theme began to develop when education and the Latino were involved. Research continually showed that because of the low participation rate in post-secondary education, there was a tremendous need for Latinos to get better educated and further their education. Furthermore, the Latino college student could face some additional burdens because of his/her economic, social and ethnic background.

It was stated that the educational attainment of Latinos lags far behind that of the population as a whole at all levels of schooling. The educational condition of the Latino was characterized by below-grade level enrollment, high attrition rates, high rates of illiteracy, low number of school years completed and great underrepresentation in higher education.

In conclusion, the emphasis of this report was to show the importance of having a well-rounded education, not only for one's own betterment, but also because of the benefits that come from a society having a well educated population.

The concerns of Latino community college students were examined in this study where they identified such issues as: (a) the fear of not being able to complete their education due to economic reasons; (b) the feeling of isolation, mostly by the females; and (3) the inadequacy of available services to them. Despite the obstacles, the
students in this study believed that their goals were attainable and possible. Their aspirations ranged from completing a Doctorate or Masters degree, obtaining a law degree, and receiving a Bachelor degree. For most of these students this was something very unique in their families. In most cases, they were the first ones to attend college and consequently the first ones to face the problems along with the accomplishments of completing a post-secondary education.

**Limitations of this Study**

One of the main limitations of this study was the use of a very small sample which did not permit a valid generalization beyond the sample tested. Furthermore, since the students selected do not represent a cross-section of the general population at Chabot College, the results or implications of this study are limited only to that small sample of students, and cannot be generalized to the general Latino population at Chabot or any other community college. In addition, one would not necessarily obtain similar results if a larger sample was used at Chabot or another community college in the area. Finally, another limitation of this study was the use of the non-random method in the selection of the participants.

Other limitations refer specifically to the technique used doing the interviews with this sample. Each
individual interview had potentially some chance of deviating from the questionnaire thus adding some error to the data collected. Another limitation could result in the interviewer skipping questions or not asking them in the same order to all the participants which could give different results. And, lastly, the limitation of the interview technique used where the interviewer's biases might influence the responses from the participants.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

1) Conduct this interview with a larger, randomly selected, cross-section of the Latino population at Chabot College.

2) Conduct this interview with same number of students of similar composition at another local community college and compare them with previous results of original interview.

3) Produce a longitudinal study that examines a group of Latino students, following them for a minimum of five years. The study would follow students from the time they first enroll in a community college and would continue for the next five years to find out if they completed their chosen or attempted goals and careers. Taking it one step further, identify any roadblocks they might have encountered which interfered in reaching their goals and find out how the students handled the situation. If similar roadblocks
were encountered by other students in the study, and the roadblocks are identified, it would prove to be extremely helpful for other students in early intervention and the desired outcome of their endeavors.

4) Develop conceptual frameworks that will highlight the current needs of the Latino population and present specific conditions needed to reach future goals.
REFERENCES


Curtis, D. (1990). Fact Sheet on the National Hispanic University. The National Hispanic University, Oakland, California.


APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE
(for Interview)

1. What do you think are the most important reasons for getting a college education? List in order of importance with 1 as the most important.

   ____ To get recognized and gain prestige
   ____ To pursue a personal goal and study a particular area of interest
   ____ To get a good-paying job and make money
   ____ To make my parents proud of me and to please them
   ____ Other, please specify

2. What is the highest educational goal you expect to reach?

   ____ an AA degree or vocational certificate
   ____ a BA or BS degree
   ____ a Masters degree
   ____ a Doctorate degree
   ____ a medical or professional degree

3. Do you feel confident you can reach your goal?

   ____ Yes    ____ Not sure

   If there's a doubt in your mind, what are some of the things you feel that can get in the way of you reaching your educational goals?

4. When did you first start thinking about going to college? Do you remember how that came about? Explain.

5. Are you the first one in your family to go to college?

   ____ Yes    ____ No

   If not, list the members in your family who have gone to college; explain if a degree was received or not.
6. What kind of job would you like to have once you receive your degree?

7. How often do you see your academic counselor at Chabot?

- Once a quarter
- 2 - 3 times a quarter
- More than 3 times in a quarter

8. How would you rate your counselor?

- Always helpful
- Sometimes helpful
- Indifferent
- A little helpful but not much
- Not helpful at all

9. In talking to a counselor, do you prefer to have one that is Hispanic?

- Yes
- No
- It doesn’t matter

10. Who do you talk to whom you have personal problems?

- A school counselor or teacher
- A family member
- A priest
- No one, I work them out by myself

11. Are you employed?

- Yes, number of hours per week
- No

12. Mark any of the following if you are receiving financial help from them.

- Parents/family
- Scholarship/grant
- Work-study
- AFDC
- Other, specify

13. Mark as many of the following concerns you have experienced while in college.
Problems with transportation
Problems with housing
Financial problems
Childcare problems
Conflict with parents or family situation
Lacking emotional support
Experiencing anxiety or depression
Feeling alienated or out of place
Problems making friends
Problems with the English language
Failing a class
Lack of concentration with school work
Teachers I can’t relate to
Health problems
Feeling that no one cares
Not having enough time for myself
Other, specify

14. How would you rate the services offered at Chabot to Hispanic students?

Very good
Satisfactory
Bad, need improvement

15. Which area would you like to see improved?

Make financial help available
Provide health services
Provide childcare
Other, specify

16. Number of college units you have completed.

Less than 15
16 - 36
37-72
over 73

17. Parents’ occupation.

Father_________________  Mother_________________

18. Your living arrangements.

Live with parents
Live with friends or room mates
Live with spouse
Live in dormitory
Other
19. Number of siblings in household.
   - None
   - 1 - 4
   - 5 or more

20. Gender
   - Female
   - Male

21. Age
   - 18 - 24
   - 25 - 34
   - over 35

22. Marital status
   - Single
   - Married
   - Divorced or separated