

EVALUATING SOCIO-CULTURE ON MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS' FAILURE  
RATE WITHIN A SOUTH TEXAS HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION BASED ON THE  
TINTO MODEL

by

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## ABSTRACT

### Evaluating Socio-Culture on Mexican American Students' Failure Rate within a South Texas Hispanic Serving Institution Based on the Tinto Model

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The logical consequence of bilingual education is the provision or guarantee of an equitable opportunity for all students to have equal access to learning and the achievement of academic success (Stewner-Manzanares, 1998). The basic definition of bilingual education in the United States (U.S.) is the use of two languages, the home language and English for instruction. Unfortunately, this basic principle is not being accepted by the post-secondary institutions as predispositions of university preparedness (Blanchard & Muller, 2014; García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008; Lee, Contreras, McGuire, Flores-Ragade, Rawls, Edwards, & Menson, 2011; Kanno & Cromley, 2013; Menken, Hudson, & Leung, 2014). Bilingual Mexican American students are potentially being left out of the opportunities afforded by the attainment of a post-secondary education because they are a language minority (Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Moll, 1990; Treuba & Wright, 1981; Trueba, 2002; Washington & Craig, 1998). The Texas Commissioner of Higher Education stated that education across the state was being redesigned to leave behind the K-12th grade model and encompass a K-16 model to include post-secondary education. Students are already examined for “postsecondary credentials” (Paredes, 2013) or college readiness, in the 8th grade. Through this testing, 11 out of every 100 Hispanic children in the state of Texas are deemed as having attained “postsecondary credentials” (Paredes, 2013). As part of the fastest growing demographic group within the U.S. and the state of Texas, the Mexican American population holds the lowest rate of graduation from post-secondary institutions and the highest high school drop-out rate of any ethnic minority in the nation. In a 12-year study, Kanno and Cromley (2013) found that 1 out of 8 English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Learner students (ELLs) attain a bachelor’s degree from post-

secondary institutions across the U.S. while the success rate for their English, monolingual counterparts is 1 out of 3. The south Texas university this study examines is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) that has a 68% Hispanic (primarily Mexican American) population (TAMUK, 2014). Garcia, et al. (2008, 2012) argue that the inequity of education in the U.S. can be measured by how few minority students educated under the principles of bilingual education attend a post-secondary environment because it is the diploma from such institutions that leads to higher paying wages for the individual (Garcia, 1991; Garcia, et al., 2008, 2012). This study will examine students who participated in bilingual education programs at any time between their Pre-K through high school experiences. This study seeks to determine a correlational, the relationship between: 1) the Mexican American socio-culture and the Mexican American students' failure rate within a south Texas HSI as prescribed by the Tinto model, and 2) the bilingual/non-bilingual Mexican American students' failure rate and the south Texas HSI's who participated in a socio-cultural environmental (Freshman Interest Group) model and their counterparts for the first year of instruction.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Hispanic population is one of the fastest growing populations in America, as well as one of the fastest-growing demographic groups of students attending institutions of higher education, but yielding the lowest level of graduation (Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008, García, Pujol-Ferran, & Reddy, 2012; Kanno, & Cromley, 2013; Menken, Hudson, & Leung, 2014; Ramirez, 1995). Although Hispanics are a large part of the country's population, they are considered to be a language minority because Spanish is spoken by fewer people in the U.S. society. In south Texas, Mexican Americans are also educated with the use of Southern English, seen as an inferior variation of Northern English further compounding the notion of their language minority status (Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Trueba, 2002; White, 2012). Garcia, et al. (2008) argue that the post-secondary institutions are not accepting the foundational premises of the English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Learner (ELL) bilingual education as predispositions for students' success. Moll (1990) reported to the U.S. Department of Education that the efforts of the teachers, families, and children who were being instructed with bilingual education programs were not being respected, despite the value academic bureaucrats place on the attainment of university instruction.

Hispanics have a distinct history of constant migration in vast numbers, unlike any other immigrant group to the U.S. and this factor has blurred the lines between the ever-fluctuating Hispanic groups (Bell, Charles Edwards, Ueffing, Stillwell, Kupiszewski, & Kupiszewska, 2015). Like all of the minority groups that have been combined under the notation of the term "Hispanic", Mexican Americans have their own, distinct history and relationship to the U.S. and to education (Garcia, et al., 2008). Mexican Americans enter into a society and immediately immerse into the amalgamation of their culture with the new society and arrive at having the attribute of socio-cultural issues: the differences between the cultures and how the individual accommodates the various new differences. Ortiz (1995) coined the term, transculturation, in defining the phenomena of adapting an existing culture to a new one as person migrates or is

imposed upon by others who migrate. Mexican Americans have attempted to resolve, pacify, or overcome their socio-cultural issues since they came into existence in 1836, as natives of the territories conquered by the U.S. from Mexico were the subject of title XIII and IX of the Hidalgo Treaty. In title IX, the language clearly allows for the conquered people to maintain the right to return to Mexico or to remain in the newly annexed lands of the U.S with citizenship. Title IX then turns around and expresses that the conquered Mexicans could stay but that their citizenship fate would be determined by an Act of Congress (Montejano, 2010).

The south Texas Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) may best be suited to work towards the development of a socio-cultural environment in which the common society is that of academia but in which, by and large, the Mexican American is allowed to continue with their beliefs, practices, customs and behaviors (Garcia, et al., 2008). The aspects of the Mexican Americans' socio-culture within the south Texas society lead them to have difficulties in being accepted by the south Texas HSI are discussed in the statement of the problem.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Current bilingual education literature (Blanchard, & Muller, 2014; Castillo, López Arenas, & Saldivarxys, 2010; Garcia, et al., 2008; García, Woodley, Flores, & Chu, 2012; Kanno, & Cromley, 2013) is lacking in providing a distinct understanding of the difficulties which exist for the bilingual/non-bilingual Mexican American student attending the post-secondary educational environment in south Texas. In spite of the numerous efforts by bilingual education researchers to examine the variables, rationales and existing obstacles which may lead to student failure or drop out from the post-secondary institutions across the nation (Mack, 2006; Garcia, et al., 2008; Garcia, 2010; Garcia, et al., 2012; Losey, 1995) little research has been conducted on whether the relationship exists between 1) the Mexican American socio-culture and the Mexican American students' failure rate within a south Texas Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), 2) the Mexican American socio-culture and the bilingual Mexican American students' failure rate within a south Texas Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), and 3) whether the south Texas HSI's faculty can alter these potential effects by creating a socio-cultural

environmental model for the first year of instruction for Mexican American students (Holliday, 2014; Kanno, & Cromley, 2013; Menken, Hudson, & Leung, 2014; Ramirez, 1995).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to examine Mexican American students who come to the south Texas HSI and 1) have Mexican American socio-cultural and/or 2) were enrolled in a bilingual education program at any time during their Pre-K-12 experiences. This correlational study examined the failure rates potentially caused by socio-cultural perceptions of Mexican American students' in the post-secondary educational environment in south Texas based on the data gathered from students and faculty, the general freshmen population from the south Texas HSI, and on state of the art academic literature (Garcia, et al., 2008; Garcia, 2010; Garcia, et al., 2012; Kanno, & Cromley, 2013; Mack, 2006; Menken, Hudson, & Leung, 2014; Osberg, & Biesta, 2008; Ramirez, 1995). Given that they are a language minority, Mexican American students in south Texas are being educated in the public schools with a foundational structure of bilingual education, allowing for English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Learner (ELL) programs which apply to them (Garcia, 2010; Kanno & Cromley, 2013; Menken, Hudson, & Leung, 2014; Osberg, & Biesta, 2008; Ramirez, 1995). However, the south Texas HSI attributes little to negative value to this predisposition (and other socio-cultural elements that comprise the Mexican American student) of an incoming student as a measure of his/her ability to succeed within the HSI (Garcia, 2010; Kanno, & Cromley, 2013).

### **Definition of Terms**

*Acculturation* is defined as an individual's process of learning about and adopting White American cultural norms and the degree to which the person maintains his or her heritage culture (Kohatsu, 2005).

*Academic Self-Concept* can be defined as a student's beliefs about his or her academic abilities as an individual and in comparison with other students (Cokley, 2000).

*Diaspora* is forced migration of a people due to weather, war or economic turmoil in their native land (Fry, 2012).

*Bilingual education* in the United States (U.S.) is the use of two languages, the home language and English for instruction (Blanchard & Muller, 2014).

*Bilingual student* is one who enters the educational system in the U.S. with a home language and is in need of developing English for instruction (Blanchard & Muller, 2014).

*Enculturation* is the process of socialization (or resocialization) into and maintenance of the heritage culture norms (Kim & Abreu, 2001).

*Faculty for the Freshmen Interest Group (FIG)* was chosen by the FIG coordinator and the advisors to maintain the cohort throughout their freshmen year in a freshmen-level course (TAMUK, 2014).

*Freshmen Interest Group (FIG)* is a community of first-year students who take 3+ classes as a cohort group by discipline (TAMUK, 2014).

*Hispanic* is defined as relating to, or being a person of Latin American descent living in the United States (de los Santos & Cuamea, 2010).

*Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)* are public and private two-and-four year colleges and universities with enrollments of 25% or more full-time Hispanic students. For the purposes of this study, the south Texas HSI is situated in the area the Texas Education Agency (TEA) considers as being Regions One, Two, and Three (Laden, 2004; U. S. Department of Commerce, 2014).

*Hispanic Students* represent the following Hispanic origins: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, and other Latino origins (Laden, 2004; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2014).

*Mexican American* is the designated term applied to the people who were conquered and assimilated in the U.S. as a result of the Hidalgo Treaty of 1836 (Vargas, 2011) or who have been born and educated in the U.S. after their parents immigrated from Mexico (Garcia, et al., 2008).

*Language Minority* is defined as a demographic group who speak a language which is not used by the majority of the population of an area (Cummins, 1981).

*Panethnicity* is the human right to preserve one's heritage, culture, and or language (Lopez & Espiritu, 1990).

*Socio-cultural* depicts attributes which occur when a person amalgamates their own culture with the new cultural they are met with (Garcia, et al., 2008).

*Socio-Economic Status (SES)* is family's socio-economic status based on family income, parental education level, parental occupation, and social status in the community such as contacts within the community, group associations, and the community's perception of the family (Demarest et al., 1993).

*South Texas* is a region of the U.S. state of Texas that lies roughly south of and including San Antonio. The southern and western boundary is the Rio Grande, and to the east it is the Gulf of Mexico (Kingston, 2014).

*Syncretism* occurs when one culture adopts some of the perceptions, mannerism and customs of a culture it encounters for the sake of creating a common society (Bordes, Sand, Arredondo, Kurpius, & Rayle, 2006).

*Transculturation* is the ability of a person to self-determine which sociocultural elements a person will opt to adapt or adopt as they interact with a new culture they are met with (Ortiz, 1995).



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is an overview of the extant literature related to the potential relationship between the Mexican American socio-culture and the bilingual Mexican American students' failure rate within a south Texas HSI. This chapter also examined literature on the potential relationship between Mexican American students' socio-cultural effects on their first year of instruction within a postsecondary environment (Sabrio & Burchfield, 2009; Ramirez, & Jimenez-Silva, 2014). First, it reviewed Tinto's (1975, 1996, 2010) theory which argued that students' success in college depends largely on the support they receive from the institutions they attend. Secondly, this chapter reviewed the Sabrio/Burchfield model (2009) which argues that bilingual Mexican American students have needs which are exclusive to their socio-culture.

#### **Theoretical Framework: Tinto's Model**

Although Tinto revisited and reanalyzed his original 1975 model in 1986, 1993 and again in 2006 and 2010, the author kept going back to the original model's assertion that student retention was corner stoned on the university's ability to comply with the students' pre-existing factors. The model (Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 2010) found the following path of a student from their home life into the university and then the subsequent events which lead them back out of the university. The author provided a visual mapping of this student path in the "*Model of Institutional Departure*", which outlines the events that occur in the life of the student before he/she arrives at a university. The author (1975, 2010) proposed that three factors play a major role in the student's prior life: 1) the development of their education and academic skills, 2) their own adoption of academics as a viable plan for their future (along with this comes determination, drive and aptitude), and 3) their parents' support for this choice to embrace higher academics. The writer suggests that if the students' parents are educated, the student will likely be more predisposed to a higher level academic option.

Tinto's model explains the three factors which are in place when the student arrives at the university:

1. The student has the previous factors that predisposed him/her to attend the university and they have channeled them into a plan for success at the university. This would include all of the preparatory classes offered by their high schools which will transition them into the university and any supplemental instruction they may have received in the form of auxiliary lessons or tutoring. The high school educational environment is often structured in standardized English which facilitates the student's interface with the high school exit exams and with the university entrance exams.
2. The student, in Tinto's model (1975, 2010), has a natural attribute for learning which becomes a component for his/her desire to continue the process of education and leads naturally into the university environment.
3. The student's parents have achieved a level of education and have demonstrated the value of having done so with better job opportunities and better environments for living. This becomes an attribute which leads these students towards wanting to achieve the same as their parents or even better (Tinto, 1975, Tinto, 2010).

The university has a plan for the success of the student in place as well a vested interest in their success. This would seem to be a recipe for success, but a breakdown occurs.

Tinto (1975, 2010) maps out the four circumstances or events which occur to the student that leads to the student's dropout from the university:

1. The student's plan for success at the university is challenged by teaching methods, his/her own learning aptitude, study habits or lack thereof and a lack of incoming freshman support facilities.
2. The student's plan for success at the university is challenged by his/her self-perception of academic integrity. They may have slipped academically and now question whether they can recover.

3. The university challenges the student's plan for success by not offering the student a clear scope of the financial responsibilities he/she will have to maintain in order to accomplish subsistence at the university.
4. The university challenges the student's plan for success by not offering the student a social environment conducive to incoming freshmen regarding time management, supplemental instruction, and financial limitations (1975, 2010).

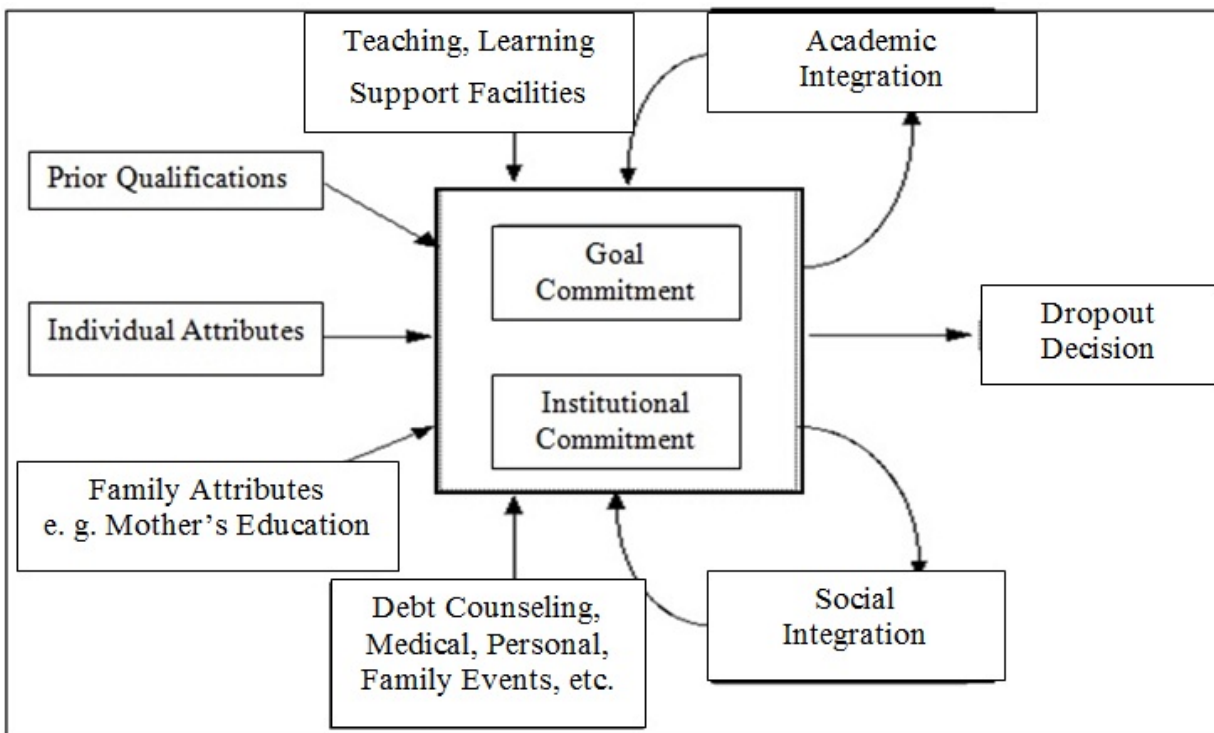


Figure 1. Tinto (1975) Model of Institutional Departure from Tinto from *Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research*.

Tinto's (1975, 2010) Model of Institutional Departure, has been what universities from across the United States have focused on as the recipe card for failure (Berge, & Huang, 2004). If a university wants to avoid failure, then the model should be heeded. According to Tinto (1975, 2010) the university should play a role in evaluating the disposition of students who plan to attend, and who plan to succeed. The university should ensure that students are well prepared for the financial aspects of their education. The university should appropriate social environments which help the students adjust to their new academic environment.

There are a myriad of dynamics that go into the development of the student's failure scenario, but a student's socio-culture is not among what Tinto (1975) places as a factor for either success or failure. In accessing the composition of the family structure, the institution opted to examine the students and their parent's level of education and not their socio-cultural alignment. At the south Texas HSI with a demographic population comprised of 68% Hispanic (Mexican-American) students (Skurman, 2014), it would be of academic value to understand

how socio-culture plays into what Tinto (1975) has established as risk factors for student failure. Collier and Thomas (2007) developed the Prism Model which depicts the cognitive steps utilized by ELL students in the development and assimilation of learning new ideas. The south Texas HSI has made a concerted effort to recruit “better”, more prepared students in order to counteract the dynamic of failure (Blanchard, & Muller, 2014; Garcia, et al., 2012).

South Texas school districts which utilize bilingual education programs and whose students may enroll into the south Texas HSI are:

- **Region One** (as reported by Bilingual Education Programs Coordinator, Virginia Champion):  
Harlingen Consolidated ISD, La feria ISD, La Feria ISD, Los Fresnos ISD, Point Isabel ISD, Rio Hondo ISD, San Benito, ISD, Santa Maria ISD, Santa Rosa ISD, Ignite Public Schools, South Texas Educational Technologies, Inc., Idea Academy, Vanguard Academy Charter School, Excellence in Leadership Academy, Donna ISD, Edouch-Elsa ISD, Hidalgo, ISD, McCallen ISD, Mercedes ISD, Mission Consolidated ISD, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD, Progresso ISD, Sharyland ISD, La Joya ISD, Weslaco ISD, Monte Alto ISD, Valley View ISD, Jim Hogg Co. ISD, Rio Grande City ISD, Roma ISD, and Laredo ISD.
- **Region Two** (as reported by Bilingual Education Programs Coordinator, Velma Salazar):  
CCISD, Aransas Pass ISD, Robstown ISD, Alice ISD, Mathis ISD, Aransas County ISD, Gregory Portland ISD, Tulosa Midway ISD, West Oso ISD
- **Region Three** (as reported by Bilingual Education Programs Coordinator, Merle Otwell):  
Rice ISD, East Bernard ISD, Austwell-Tivoli ISD, Bloomington ISD’El Campo ISD, Ganado ISD, Goliad ISD, Industrial ISD, Louise ISD, Matagorda ISD’ Meyersville ISD, Moulton ISD, Nursery ISD, Shiner ISD, Tidehaven ISD, Van Vleck ISD, Westhoff ISD, Yoakum ISD, Yorktown ISD.

Thomas and Collier (2004) stated that students with issues of proficiency with English have major gaps to overcome in arriving at educational equity. Calderón, Hertz-Lazarowitz, and

Slavin (1998) indicate that students need to be engaged in bilingual education programs that are well designs for their specific needs. Respecting the socio-culture of students in their process of writing is a component of accepting the student's diversity. A lack of a concerted effort in the development of language skills could lead to students arriving at the south Texas HSI with predisposed elements of failure caused by a discontinuity between the school district they attended and the university which leads this study towards examining a potential bridge for the gaps (Calderón, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Slavin, 1998; Thomas & Collier, 2004).

### **Bridging the Gap between the Mexican American Student and the HSI**

Sabrio and Burchfield (2009) recommend that the south Texas HSI's faculty, staff and administrators be advised of the historical differences of the Mexican American culture given that they comprises the vast majority of the students enrolled. Understanding the syncretic, non-diaspora, panethnic attributes of the Mexican American experience within south Texas would benefit all of the previously mentioned entities by providing a more clear definition of the Mexican American students and of how their academic needs can be facilitated. Considering how few (3.9%) students attend post-secondary institutions across Texas, it benefits the south Texas HSI to diligently retain the population it invites to study (Paredes, 2013).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized that there is no way to understand a person unless they are viewed from the lens of their own environment and taking them from that and immersing them into a strange environment could possibly impede a person's ability to thrive. Ogbu (1992) agreed with the finding of Bronsbrenner (1979), explaining that minority studies towards developing selective education programs began in the U.S. in the 1960's and the outcome resulted in programs that were rarely based on the reality of the student's cultural dynamics. In the same vein, Howard (2007) advocated for White teachers to compel themselves to bridge the cultural gaps so that could stop failing at teaching non-White students.

Following Tinto (1975, 2010), Zell (2010) and Mack (2006) indicate that the lack of cultural acceptance and accommodation of the Mexican American student leads the student to reject the HSI as a viable environment in which to self-accommodate, self-enculturate, and self-

acculturate. A claim (Howard, 2007) has been made that White teachers cannot be held responsible for not knowing what they simply do not know and that it is impossible for them to impart knowledge they do not possess. Howard (2007) strongly advocates for White teachers to address the deficiency created by the cultural mismatch because most of the schools across the U.S. are now attended by a multicultural diversity of students. These structural ecology issues (Hudley & Mallinson, 2011; Kamil, Mosenthal, Pearson, & Barr, 2002; Ogbu, 1992) imposed on the Mexican American student, along with the perceptions imposed on them, might lead to their decision to depart from the HSI.

The south Texas HSI can alter the potential negative effects already listed by utilizing a socio-cultural environmental model for the first year of instruction. The U.S. post-secondary academic community relies heavily on the Tinto Model of Student Failure which was conceptualized in 1975. This model was designed to be universal in explaining the failure of students from post-secondary institutions without weighing the notion of cultural dynamics. Given that Tinto's (1975) Model of Institutional Departure does not apply sufficiently to Mexican American students enrolled in a south Texas HSI, this study will utilize a second theoretical framework proposed by Sabrio and Burchfield (2009) as a socio-culturally accommodating model for explaining the failure of Mexican American students from the south Texas HSI.

The south Texas HSI, in seeking to promote the retention of Mexican Americans students could consider a new model of student failure, the Sabrio/Burchfield model (Sabrio & Burchfield, 2009) which does consider the cultural dynamics of the south Texas Mexican American students.

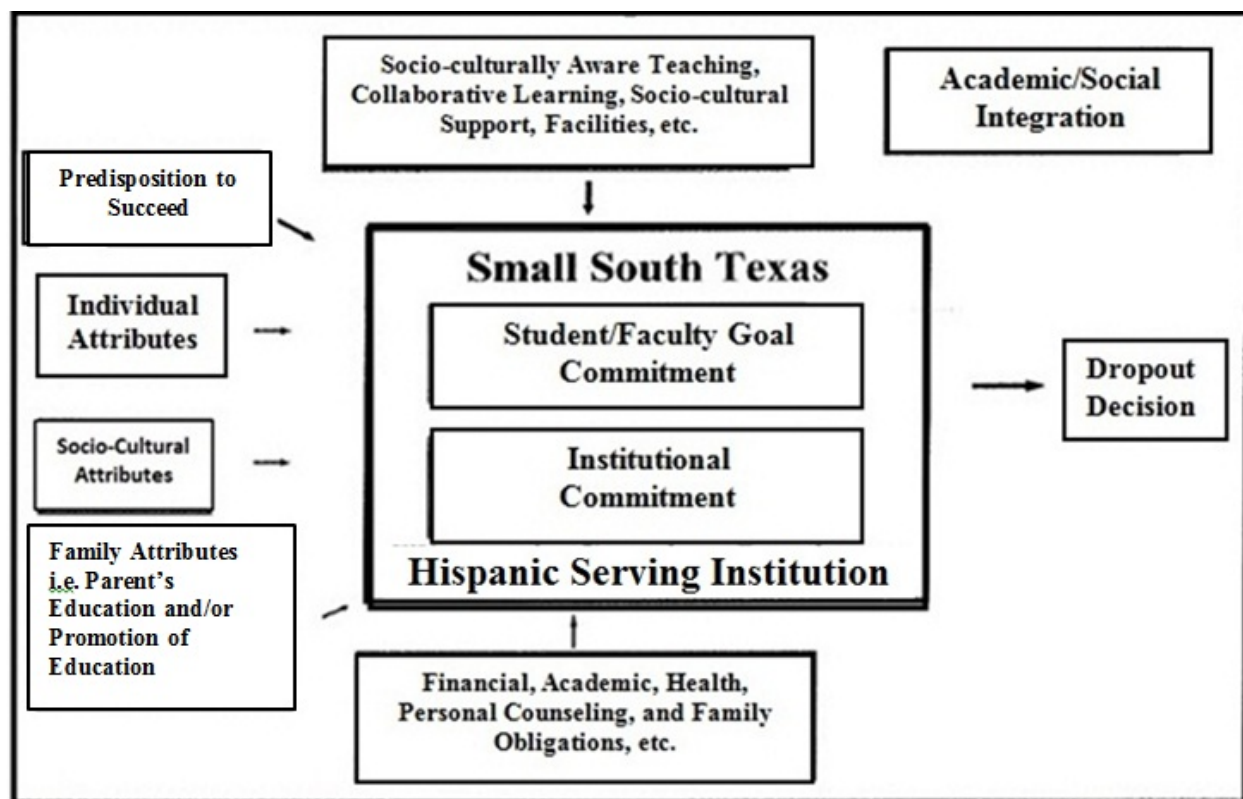


Figure 2. The Sabrio/Burchfield (2009) Model for Mexican American Student Failure

Sabrio and Burchfield (2009) both teach at south Texas HSIs that are predominantly populated by Mexican American students. They wrote the text book, *Insightful Writing: A Process Rhetoric with Readings* which begins by allowing the students to examine and identify their personal, dominant style of learning (Sabrio & Burchfield, 2009). The student is then asked to examine the eight proposed human intelligences and determine which they more strongly identify with. There is careful attention paid to the notion that humans are capable of exhibiting all eight to some degree (Sabrio & Burchfield, 2009). The concepts of learning and display of intelligences are presented in a culturally respectful platform that insists that these are socio-cultural traits exhibited by all of the students.

In contrast to Tinto (1975), Sabrio and Burchfield (2009) identified four elements which are in place when the student arrives at the university:

1. The student has the previous factors that predisposed him/her to attend the university and they have channeled them into a plan for success at the south Texas HSI. This would



include all of the preparatory classes which will transition them into the university and any supplemental instruction they may have received. However, south Texas high schools often struggle with the deficiency of meeting the concept of standardized English as it applies to the state's competency exams. It is often not financially feasible for the south Texas Mexican American student's family to afford the cost of supplementing their education with tutors or additional activities. As the literature indicated, students may opt to engage in what is communally comfortable for them rather than to attend Euro-centric performances or activities. The entrance exam for the south Texas HSI may be a challenge to the student.

2. The student does have a natural propensity for learning which becomes a component for his/her desire to continue the process of education and leads naturally into a south Texas HSI environment.
3. The student has been raised in a cultural community that may or may not value the decision to embrace education. As was noted in the literature, some Mexican American families see education as time away from the goal of earning a living. Some may find even a high school diploma as a waste of time and certainly deferring work to study for 4-5 years is seen as a selfish endeavor which will only benefit the singular person rather than the collective family. Given the communal, collectivistic nature of the Mexican American family, the student often must go against the wishes of, not only his/her parents, but grandparents, other relatives and even siblings.
4. The student's parents by and large, may not have achieved a level of education and may be demonstrating the value of not having done so by existing in a financially trying environment. These parents invest as much as possible into the betterment of their children and while it is not the parents' education the child is bolstered by, it is the parents' desire for the child's betterment that becomes the attribute for success at the HSI. The student adopts the idea that he/she wants to do well and elevate the existence of the family and of the culture (pp. xv-xvii).

The south Texas HSI has a plan for the success of the student in place as well and between the predisposed desire of the students and the indication that the south Texas HSI has a vested interest in their success as well, it would seem to be a recipe for total success, but a breakdown occurs. Sabrio and Burchfield (2009) map out the seven circumstances or events which occur to the student that lead to the student's dropout from the south Texas HSI:

1. The student's plan for success at the south Texas HSI is challenged by teaching methods, his/her own learning aptitude which may be hindered by the lack of preparation from within the high school program, study habits or lack thereof and a lack of incoming freshman support facilities.
2. The student's plan for success at the south Texas HSI is challenged by a lack of culturally aware teaching. Deficiency in standardized English does not automatically mean incompetence in learning. Teachers must be aware of the cultural platforms the students stand on and strengthen the structure immediately. Sabrio and Burchfield (2009) advocate for this process to take place with the Freshman Rhetoric and Composition class where the student can be allowed to write about his/her own experiences while being scaffolded into academic structure, etiquette and protocol. The students are allowed to speak comfortably about who they are and where they come from while they are exposed to higher level methods of writing and structure. If a teacher fails to accommodate the need for additional structure, the student will perceive the judgment of being deficient and possibly shut down as a student.
3. Given the possibility that the student may have caused some estrangement with his collectivistic family in order to attend the university, the weight of the choice may be massive and may keep the student in a state of continual guilty. As the literature explained, the student may feel as though his/her relatives are right and that he/she has made a mistake. A student sits in the classroom with the collective family weighing on his/her shoulders.

4. The student's plan for success at the university is challenged by his/her self-perception of academic integrity. They may have slipped academically and now question whether they can recover.
5. The south Texas HSI challenges the student's plan for success by not offering the student a clear scope of the financial responsibilities he/she will have to maintain in order to accomplish subsistence at the university.
6. The south Texas HSI challenges the student's plan for success by not offering the student a social environment conducive to incoming freshmen and their time and financial abilities.
7. The student who grew up in a collectivist family dynamic does not have simple "family events" (Tinto, 1975), he/she has family obligations. If a crisis occurs, the expectation is that he/she will drop what he/she is doing to go home to a part of the waiting process while the crisis plays out. If illness occurs to any member, the same expectation is in play. Even emotional crisis' play the same role in the life of the student. He/she is expected to go home to help out. The death of a parent becomes a catastrophic event which often leads to the student having to leave the university to return home to help the family financially (pp. xv-13).

Sabrio and Burchfield (2009) offer the following as means for countering the effects of the Institutional Model for Failure (Tinto, 1975; 2010):

- Collaborative learning which allows students to learn with and from each other. This method of instruction becomes a means of socializing students and allowing them to find commonality with other students within the HSI.
- Self-examination and self-accommodation within the learning process. Students must determine their own, most effective learning style in order to maintain their determination to succeed in an environment which requires them to absorb massive amounts of data at a fast pace.

- Acceptance of the concept of multiple intelligences as being the foundation of post-secondary learning. Students who recognize that they are capable of “linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, body-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic” (pp. 10-13) intelligences are more apt to absorb critical thinking about a myriad of content areas.
- Self-acceptance in expecting the student to integrate his/her own life experiences into the process of “writing, reading, speaking, and listening” (Sabrio & Burchfield, 2009, p. xv) allows the student to showcase who they are and to embrace their culture and families.
- Arrival at the university is the beginning of the process of the student’s post-secondary education. This foundation needs to be set in place with solid structure and direction which will enable the student to feel confident that the university is invested in his/her success (pp. xv-13).

Utilizing the concepts set forth by Sabrio and Burchfield (2009) for the desire to provide a socio-cultural learning environment for the first year student within the English Rhetoric and Composition courses, the notion was expounded by the south Texas HSI’s faculty utilization of a socio-cultural educational environment, the Freshmen Interest Group (FIG). This program has made it possible for the Mexican American student to immerse into the HSI by a more comfortable means. The premise of the program is that the HSI does have preconceived goals for the students which may not match the reality of the student’s academic, social, or financial preparation. The program places students into groups determined by their discipline which will remain as a group or cohort throughout their freshmen year. These groups are enrolled into 3+ classes per semester which are denoted as being FIG. Academic advisors determine which 3+ classes the students would participate in the program (TAMUK, 2014).

The faculty for the FIG program is selected by the Center for Student Success, the academic advisors and the FIG Coordinator. If a cohort is placed into English 1301 for the fall semester, they will seamlessly enter into English 1302 in the spring semester with the same

instructor. This applies to Math, Science and other freshmen-level classes. Classes are lower in population for the FIG, often capped at 15 students.

FIG students are encouraged to work collaboratively in the classes and outside of the classes in study and even for socialization. This concept allows for the instructor to offer information and for the students to then share their funds of acquired knowledge with one another, thus bridging the gap of potential deficiencies which may have occurred in high school. This FIG model also addresses and complies with the Tinto (1975, 2010) component of failure which occurred because the student did not find socialization. The FIG students get to know each other quite well by the end of the freshmen year.

There is a low rate of completion of university programs for students in the U.S., but studies clearly indicate that the Mexican American community is the lowest in terms of university completion rates. Mexican Americans comprise 69% of the demographic group denoted as Hispanic by the U.S. Census Bureau (U. S. Department of Commerce, 2014). Santiago (2007) conducted research for Excelencia in Education and found that Mexican Americans were woefully lagging in university completion rates. Santiago (2010) indicated in her studies that the completion rate for Asian Americans was 57% while the White Americans had a 44%, and African Americans had a 30%. Mexican Americans were found to be the largest population of Americans and yet had an 11% completion rate within universities. The number of Mexican American graduates dropped substantially between 2007 and 2013 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2014). Given the fact that Mexican Americans are faring as low as they are, it would benefit the academic community to examine the cultural nuances as a component element of a Model for Failure (Tinto, 1975; Sabrio & Burchfield, 2009).

### **Historical Overview of Bilingual Mexican American Students in Education**

The concept of a Mexican American came into existence after the 1836-1848 events leading to the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which determined that those who were already living in the territory annexed into the U.S. could provisionally become part of the new government (Montejano, 2010; Sandoval & Miller, 2009). The Mexican Americans of south

Texas became members of the U.S. society through the venue of conquest (Sandoval & Miller, 2009; Vargas, 2011). Several events occurred after this time period which should have placed the Mexican American in the mindset of the U.S. government:

1929: The longest-lasting and the largest Hispanic organization was formed through the merging of various other groups. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) proclaimed to the nation and its government that Hispanics were, in fact, citizens. Their grass roots, civil rights activism lead to the desegregation of schools and to the fight against the perception that Hispanic children were inferior minds. LULAC participated in a wide variety of court cases, advocating for the advancement of the Hispanic community (Orozco, 1992).

1930: *Del Rio ISD V. Salviatierra* became a landmark case against the barrier of education for Mexican American children. Segregation mandated that children of color be schooled in separate schools from white children. In areas, like Del Rio, Texas a third element of population, the Mexican Americans, lead the educational system to create third level of segregation. This practice was sanctioned by the U.S. Constitution of 1876, in Article VII, Section 7. Jesus Salviatierra and a group of other parents began the legal battle on January 7, 1930 for the right of their children to be recognized as “another white race”. It would be in 1948 that the issue would be settled; as a U.S. District Court found that (in *Delgado v Bastrop ISD*) that the schools upholding the segregation were violating the Fourteenth Amendment rights of the Mexican American children. The Fourteenth Amendment declares that any person born in the U.S. is covered by the constitution, as a citizen (Orozco, 2010).

1945: The G.I. Forum began as Hector P. Garcia organized 700 Mexican American veterans after the director of a funeral home in Three Rivers, Texas refused to allow Private Felix Longoria’s family the use of the chapel for services. The group, gathered in corpus Christi, catapulted the incident towards national attention leading to President, Lyndon B. Johnson proclaiming that Private Felix Longoria be buried in Arlington National Cemetery. The G.I. Forum expanded in scope to activism for minority rights, adding women and children to their groups of veterans (Allsup, 1977).

1950: Felix Tijerina created the *Little School(s) of 400*. Tijerina's literacy project was assisted by LULAC. His idea was to instill a 400 word vocabulary into Spanish speaking preschool children, so that they would attain English competency and not be seen as a diminished student. Tijerina's hope was that the 400 words would allow English as Second Language students to survive the first grade. His effort was an attempt at combating the high dropout rate the Mexican American community was facing because of the language barrier. Tijerina would eventually serve as LULAC's national President in 1956 (Kreneck, 1985).

The aforementioned timeline denotes the activism of the Mexican Americans across the country as it dealt with the issues including educational and civil rights. What began with the creation of LULAC and the question posed by *Del Rio ISD V. Salvatierra* regarding Mexican Americans being "another white race", and the national scope gained by the G.I. Forum would all culminate as these groups joined their legal forces to battle the government in *Hernandez v Texas* (Allsup, 1977; Orozco, 1977; Kreneck, 1985; Orozco, 2010; Sandoval & Miller, 2009).

In their documentary, *A Class Apart*, Sandoval and Miller (2009) narrate the historical court case of *Hernandez v Texas*. It was tried before the Supreme Court in 1954 (over 100 years after the war between Mexico and the U.S.) and yet sitting justices had to ask for clarification as to whether Mexican Americans were legally recognized as U.S. citizens. *Hernandez v Texas* established that Mexican Americans were, not "another white race" as they had previously argued (Orozco, 2010). They were said to be, like African Americans, categorized as a minority class apart and were afforded all of the rights and protections of the U.S. Constitution, including to the right to a jury by peers (as was sought by Pedro Hernandez for whom the case was fought) (Sandoval & Miller, 2009).

Despite of the Supreme Court's 1954 decision, Valdivieso (1990) indicated that, up until 1989, the U.S. Census Bureau classified all individuals who were of Mexican descent as Mexican American. The 1990 Census reclassified the category of Mexican and/or Mexican American to the term Hispanic (Laden, 2004; U. S. Department of Commerce, 2014; Valdivieso, 1990). The 2010 U.S. Census Bureau states that Hispanic or Latino refers to any and all

individuals from Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, South or Central America, or who share any other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race and regardless of where they were born. With this new categorization and with the creation of one umbrella under which all Hispanics were placed, the U.S. Census Bureau eradicated the distinction of citizenship and, in essence, subjugated all Hispanics to forever being immigrants into America (United States Census Bureau, 2008).

Recent bilingual educational research (Aguayo, Herman, Ojeda, & Flores, 2011; Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria 2013; Ortiz & Telles, 2012; Umaña-Taylor, Wong, Gonzales & Dumka, 2012) indicated that there are various differences among the population of peoples the U.S. government has designated as being Hispanic. People categorized by the U.S. government as Hispanic, who have come because of an imposed diaspora, have different issues related to their academic failure from post-secondary institutions than do the Mexican American population. Mexican Americans tend to have a syncretic experience within America, having evolved over several generations, amalgamating some of the American values while maintaining the essence of their Mexican heritage (Freire, 2000; Vargas, 2011). If the Mexican American student failed, it was because they opted to fail. This mindset is said to be ingrained within the culture of the Mexican American. This perception of blaming the victim has been catalogued as an accepted fact after examining several generations (Schlesinger, 1998; Ryan, 1976).

The post-secondary institution has adopted a set of guidelines for the measurement of all students who wish to enroll (Tinto, 1975). Those guidelines have been in place since the 1970's when the author (1975) proposed the *Model of Institutional Failure*. The author (1999, 2006) offered an idea for the promotion of student retention, but it his 1975 work that is still applied, by and large, to the concept of student failure from post-secondary institutions. Academia has not considered the Mexican American students' high statistical failure from their institutions as an issue of concern until recently when the highest demographic minority, the Mexican American, has continually met with dismal failure. The south Texas HSI is based on a Euro-centric fund of knowledge defined by Moll, Soto Santiago and Schwartz (2013) as being "the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or



individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133). Universities do not often include the multicultural components of individuals even though most such institutions now attract a global population (Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Freire, 2000; Ogbu, 1987, 1992; Spring, 1994). Students who opt to enroll into a post-secondary institution must accept what is offered and must self-accommodate, self-enculturate, and self-acculturate to the cultural structure of academia. Bilingual or bicultural education is not offered to university students as classes are often an English-Only environment.

The educational system cannot claim that the Mexican American failure is a result of a recent diaspora which has not allowed the system enough time to accommodate this population. Mexican Americans have been a part of the south Texan landscape for numerous generations (Fry, 2011; Sandoval & Miller, 2009). Freire (2000) would insist that the pedagogy being instilled into those going forth from the post-secondary institution to educate the Mexican American students is oppressive and not conducive to success because it fails to allow for the Mexican American’s fund of knowledge and suppresses the language and culture of the student for the sake of elevating what is promoted as a more valuable language and culture. The consequences of the high failure rate of Mexican American students in post-secondary institutions is that state and federal governments have begun to assess the investments they make in allowing federal funding to be continually funneled towards an outcome of failure. Given this new economic environment, the south Texas HSI has been forced to try to understand the socio-cultural dynamics that come with Mexican American students (Dumka, Gonzales, McClain, & Millsap, 2013).

These perceptions regarding the Mexican American student envelop what comprises the rationale of the elements of their success or failure from the south Texas HSI. The academic community should be mindful of the implications of understanding these elements or risk remaining misguided and in a state of misperception. The bilingual education community should provide support for the distinct needs of the Mexican American students. These perceptions have emerged from the syncretic evolution of the Mexican Americans, who have, over a large span of

time, adopted what would be their panethnic human right at preserving their culture (Freire, 2000; Ogbu, 1987, 1992).

Mexican Americans are perceived by the U.S. community, who established the HSI through its government, as being hard workers who are religious and family-oriented. That would seem to arrive at a positive perception of this culture, but in fact, just the opposite is true within the academic community (Aguayo, Herman, Ojeda, & Flores, 2011). The Mexican American is perceived to opt to work at menial jobs rather than to work towards their academic betterment. It is thought that immediate gratification of earning some money is better than persisting at a university until a degree is attained so that a larger salary can be earned. The Mexican American affiliation with the religion (by and large, Catholic) is perceived to be zealous and detrimental since the culture is mired by a high percentage of teen pregnancy given that birth control is prohibited by the church. The Mexican American's collectivistic view of family is perceived to be contrary to the American ideal of individualism (Aguayo, Herman, Ojeda, & Flores, 2011; Arana, Castañeda-Sound, Blanchard, & Aguilar, 2011; Bordes-Edgar, Arredondo, Kurpius, & Rund, 2011). A Mexican American student will leave the university campus to return home more often to check on family situations than their counterparts. The academic community sees this pattern as an indication that the Mexican American student does not acculturate or enculturate to the campus and this behavior directs the Mexican American students' self-perception towards the path of failure and departure (Arana et al., 2011; Bordes-Edgar et al., 2011; Duncan, 2014).

Ultimately, the U.S. perception of the south Texas Mexican American is that they self-imposed themselves to exist within the lower socio-economic strata of the nation's population by not persisting towards betterment during a time when the nation needs its citizens to attain education which will allow the nation to excel within the global market. Because the Mexican American community is so large, the U.S. perceives them as a societal hindrance which they have not been able to address or alter (Arana et al., 2011; Bordes-Edgar et al., 2011; Duncan,

2014). The perceptions of the U.S. factor strongly into the development of the universities in which Mexican American students will study.

The south Texas post-secondary institution examined by this study is designated as an HSI complying with the federal qualification to meet or exceed a demographic population of 25% or more Hispanics as a part of its student body (Zell, 2010). The south Texas HSI has a 68% Hispanic (in this case—south Texas Mexican American) student population. The south Texas HSI specifically denotes that it is not counting international students as a part of the “Hispanic” category of its demographic population, which primarily leaves the local, south Texas Mexican Americans to be denoted in this category (TAMUK, 2014).

The south Texas HSI adopted the language, beliefs and social definitions of Mexican Americans when they sought the right to be designated as an HSI under the Title V legislation that the U.S. Congress established in 1992 (Duncan, 2014, Pacheco, 2014). The U.S. Congress recognized the egregious gap in the opportunities- economically, educationally and societally, between White students and Mexican American students, but yet, in section 501(1) of Title V, Congress chose to add the notion that Mexican American students were not opting to attend and/or graduate from post-secondary institutions, much to the ire and concern of the nation’s need. This language, promoted by Congress, demonstrates the finding that Mexican Americans do not seek a post-secondary education and when and if they do try, they often do not exhibit persistence to complete a degree program and promotes the concept of blaming the victim (Arana et al., 2011; Bordes-Edgar et al., 2011; Duncan, 2014; Ryan, 1976).

The language in Title V is incredibly vague, stating that the purpose of an HSI is two-fold: to attract Mexican American students and to keep them engaged (Duncan, 2014). The U.S. government failed to develop the same opportunity for one minority than it had previously created for another. The HSI, as described by HACU (1992), was simply funded for having a demographic population and then warned that they might not succeed because of the predispositions of the Mexican American community thus perpetuating the self-fulfilling prophecy (Arana et al., 2011; Bordes-Edgar et al., 2011; Duncan, 2014; Tauber, 1997).

Because the U.S. Congress has warned the HSI not to rely on the Mexican American students they are to attract, it then becomes logical that the HSI institution develops goals for the incoming Mexican American student based on the needs for the overall society and not for the reality of the Mexican American student. Such goals include courses which the student's high school may not have offered and language which the student may not speak or have ever heard (Zell, 2010). In the south Texas HSI, English courses are based on formal, Northern English and Spanish classes are based on the Caribbean dialect of the Puerto-Rican staff currently in place. Both these language bases separate the south Texas Mexican American population from their regional bilingual foundation.

Aside from the development of courses, the south Texas HSI sets goals for the Mexican American student (as it does for all students) regarding where they will live, what social events they will attend, what they will eat, how much money they will be allotted, and how they will manage health issues that may arise (Tinto, 1975, 2010). The problem the Mexican American student often faces is in not understanding that the HSI has already set these goals and, in essence, predetermined the students' path without telling them. The meals served in the dining halls are universally designed, not specifically for one culture or another. Money allotment and money management are issues the Mexican American student faces and this often comes to a crisis point if mismanagement occurs or if the family is not able to meet the portion of the financial responsibility the HSI and the federal government determined was their portion. The parents are often not prepared for this reality, as well. The cost of attending a university has skyrocketed while the available grants have diminished. A south Texas student should anticipate paying \$4,366 for In-State Tuition, \$2574 for "Other" fees, \$7,484 for Room and Board and approximately \$1,300 for books and supplies for one semester at the south Texas HSI assessed by this study (TAMUK, 2014). As faculty within the south Texas HSI post-secondary institution is well aware, Mexican American students are forced to sign up for student loan which leads them to amass debt.

### **The Faculty Perceptions of Mexican American Students**

Tinto (2010) and Sabrio and Burchfield (2009) address that university faculty do not own up to the role they play in student failure (Arana et al, 2011). Literature strengthens the notion of faculty being empowered to blame the students' for their perceived deficiencies. Schlesinger (1993) admonished immigrants to allow for the process of assimilation if they wanted to come to America and be a part of this nation, as the nation's motto declared: *E Pluribuse Unun (Out of the Many, One)*. Schlesinger (1993) invited the immigrants to embrace the melting pot; to climb in and immerse into America. Then, Schlesinger (1993) defined the process of this melting pot by clearly stating that the foundation of the pot was White and anyone who came into the system of the melting pot would come out, having immersed into this foundation, as White (Schlesinger,1993).

Academia is seen, by university faculty, as the bastion of European enlightenment set forth by Schlesinger (1993), embodied within the bricks and books housed at each university. The Ivory Tower was erected to vanguard academia from diminishment given Eurocentric elitists deem the knowledge they have amassed as being more worthy of protection and collection than other cultures' (Schlesinger, 1993). Ironically, universities should mirror the concept of Socrates, who created the concept of the school, by inviting the locals to come think with him and thus increase all of their funds of knowledge. Now, instead of allowing people to share and interexchange knowledge, the role of the faculty has become to share their personal interpretation of what they learned at their universities. Faculty fights for their right to espouse their own academic beliefs under the banner of academic freedom. Chomsky (2011) indicated that the word *educate* comes from the Latin word, *educir*, which translates to "*to shed light upon*". The author (2011) went on to say that the role of the teacher was to shed light on the path of the students and to lead them out of the darkness. He then admonished the industry of education declaring that educators needed to first find the light so they could stop leading their students around, haplessly, in the dark (Chomsky, 2011). Given the present state of academic, the south Texas HSI does not recognize or welcome the Mexican American's fund of knowledge.

Although, by and large, university faculty is comprised of individuals who came from lower and/or middle socio-class existences, they strove to be a part of the elite structure of academia. Freire (2000) warned that a slave who rose to the task of the overseer often was harsher than the slave owner as a means of protecting his/her newly established power base. Mack (2002) highlighted the vast gap that exists between faculty and the Mexican American student, with overt attempts at intimidating the student and overt reminders of their academic deficiencies. Mack (2006) imposes the onus of the relationship between the faculty and the Mexican American student to the student by stating that it is their self-perception that is the critical issue. Ironically, she goes on to admonish Mexican American students to fight against the perception universities have of their substandard and limited academic abilities (Mack, 2006; Clopper & Pisoni, 2002).

Kells (2002) and Becerra (2006) explain that the south Texas university faculty blames the academic deficiencies of the Mexican American student on the choices they did or did not make before opting to enroll. The author indicates that academia ignores the reality that economically or culturally, Euro-centric entertainment is not often a viable choice for the Mexican American student, but faculty suggest that more academic books should have been read, more cultured music should have been heard and more Shakespearean plays should have been attended rather than to have chosen pop culture events (Mack, 2006).

Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) explain that faculty can prejudicially determine which students will thrive under their instructions and they can set in place a self-fulfilling outcome in which the student does increase in ability because the faculty ensured that the chosen student(s) had the extra time and attention. The researchers label this as a Pygmalion affect. By direct contrast, McLeod (1995) explains that a faculty can utilize the same means of determining that a student will not fare well under his/her instruction and begin the process of withholding extra time and attention away from the perceived deficient student and, again, arrive at a self-fulfilled prophecy where the student performs poorly or fails (Tauber, 1997).

Although the south Texas HSI has a 68% Hispanic (primarily Mexican American) population of students, their faculty is only 20% Hispanic. The Mexican American students attending the south Texas HSI are a language minority that encounters a cultural mismatch (Cummins, 1981). The HSI's faculty's perception of the Mexican American student, which is shared, by and large by the U.S. community, is ultimately that if he/she knew that their goal was to attain a degree from a university, he/she should have prepared with the academic criteria that they would need upon arrival to the faculty's classes. The faculty is not considering their own role in the failure which may well be caused by the effects of their instruction as being either Pygmalion, or Golem (McLeod, 1995; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

### **The Mexican American Student's Self Perception**

The Mexican American student's self-perception is based on the south Texas family having been altered through the syncretic process, aligning certain aspects of the culture to meet the needs of the academic community (Alba & Marrow, 2014). As for any demographic group, the concept of self-perception is attached to the socio-economic strata in which the person exists (Bordes, Sand, Arredondo, Kurpius, & Rayle, 2006; Wycoff, 1996). The Mexican American family promotes a desire for the student to adopt and excel within academics at all levels from within the socio-economic strata, however, it is more difficult for the lower-income class families to persistently promote education when the family is in need of the student's income (Arana, et al., 2011).

It is often the case that a student from an impoverished family will seek employment as soon as he/she is legally allowed do so by the U.S. Department of Labor, which sets the age when a minor can work (on a limited hours basis) at 14 (Perez, 2014). Younger students seek work that does not require documentation of age like yard work, baby-sitting, house cleaning and/or farm work. Impoverished Mexican American families still hire out the entire family as migrant workers, traveling to where the crops are grown and working as pickers and packers of produce. The U.S. Department of Labor sets the age when a minor is eligible for migrant farm work at 12 (Perez, 2014), but children younger than this have been observed working as produce

pickers and packers. Each member of the family plays a role and contributes to the life and existence of the family's well-being (Zell, 2010).

The perception of the Mexican American student from a low socio-economic family needs to be re-aligned to the possibility that they could be of higher value to the collectivistic family if they attained a post-secondary education (Hall, Zhao, & Shafir, 2013; Massey, Charles, Lundy, & Fischer, 2011). It has been noted that an impoverished Mexican American family will choose a child from within their family to support through the attainment of a post-secondary education for the betterment of the collectivistic whole. All of the children work to assist in the paying of the tuition, books and needs of the chosen student (Tienda, Mitchell, Schneider, Martinez, & Ownes, 2006).

The concept of collectivism crosses the boundaries of a nuclear family within the Mexican American culture. First, second, and third cousins are still seen as close family. They have a commonality of having shared family member. It is out of respect for the elders that cousins all remain close. This macro-vision of collectivism allows for all of the levels from the socio-economic strata to interact. Holidays often merge the macro-collective family and the lower socio-economic families are exposed to the reality of what education and better jobs bring to the table of the children of the cousins who broke away from the labor-based jobs (Bordes et al., 2006, Freire, 2000; Hall et al., 2013; Tienda et al., 2006; Zell, 2010). This instills a desire for the lower-income families to promote education to their children, which is a key component to post-secondary success (Hayes, Blake, Darensbourg, & Castillo, 2014; Tinto, 1975). The Mexican American student's self-perception is then altered to include the potential that education could lead to betterment. If their cousin attained an education, they can too (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007).

South Texas offers yet another element for the Mexican American student as an alignment to a group as they develop a self-perception. The cities in south Texas are separated by their team affiliation. Each city has their team and the students meet each other as rivals on the football field or basketball court. Even the academic decathlons are a fierce competition between



the cities (Fry, 2011). These competitions become another means for integrating the cultures to embrace a superordinate goal of winning against a counter foe. While sports could offer the Mexican American student the opportunity to level the social playing field, developing as an athlete takes time and a tremendous amount of money for the proper training, equipment and the travel. Because of these obstacles a large portion of the Mexican American population of students are left out of the potential of the advancement via sports (Fry, 2011). Lower socio-economical families will sacrificially work towards enabling their children to participate in a sport with the hope that their investment will yield the child an opportunity to attain post-secondary scholarship (Fry, 2011)

The self-perception of students who grow up in a middle-high socio-economic family may involve them being more detached from the cultural normative by the family who wishes to sanitize the elements of the culture that may set aside their children in the educational environment (Mack, 2006). Spanish is often no longer spoken as an English-Only environment is imposed by the family in hopes that the children will transculture into the U.S. public school system with enough success to allow them to continue on into a post-secondary education (Lopez, 2014; Tienda et al., 2006). Although these families exist within the middle-high socio-economic strata, it most often did not come because of the attainment of post-secondary education (Martinez, 2011). These parents both work and they promote education as a means of their children doing better than they have done. These parents are often very involved in their children's education, promoting extracurricular activities in both academics and sports (Castellanos et al., 2013; Fry, 2011; Mack, 2006). It is not unusual, within smaller south Texas communities to find Mexican American students who are involved in class leadership, two-three sports, band, and academic organizations (Gonzalez, Cavazos, De La Garza, Garcia Jr., Garcia, Martinez, ... & Vilorio, 2013). The perception of the Mexican American student who grows up in the middle-high socio-economic family is that a post-secondary education is expected of them. It is often another obligation to comply with for the sake of their family (Tienda, et al., 2006).

Although the south Texas Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) has a basic understanding of the Mexican American as being family-oriented, religious and industrious, their perceptions are not always positive. The familialism is often seen as an obstruction because the Mexican American will often stay close to the family, forsaking potential opportunities if it requires moving away. Their religion is also seen as a negative, given that the culture has a high rate of teen pregnancy by and large because of the Catholic faith's abolition of contraception. The industrious nature of the culture is often exploited and seen as a means for obtaining low-wage, manual labor. Amidst all of the external perceptions lay the internal, self-perceptions of the Mexican American students.

Tinto (1975, 2010) examined the path of the academic study of student failure from the time he wrote the 1975 model and lamented that post-secondary institutions have not done much in correcting their own responsibilities in enabling the issue. The author (2006) stated that there was much work to be done in the promotion of student retention, specifically in the application of what had already been provided as effective practices. The author explained that universities were behind the times in making efforts at reducing failure and embracing potential retention. (Tinto, 2006).

Tinto (1975, 2010) went on to explain how the post-secondary institutions view students, in general. This compilation of attributes the author assigned to students may be applied to Mexican American students as well. The author stated that institutions have viewed students, over the past 40 years, through a lens of generalized behaviors which lead the institutions to access that failure or success is the direct result of the students' abilities or lack thereof. Students either have attributes, skills, and motivation or they lack these attributes. Tinto wrote, "Students failed, not institutions. This is what we now refer to as blaming the victim (Arana et al, 2011; Tinto, 2006 p. 2).

While Tinto (2006) speaks of this having been a practice of thinking on the part of post-secondary institutions which occurred in the past, some scholars Arana et al. (2011), Bordes-Edgar et al. (2011), and Duncan (2014) asserted that this is an ongoing practice. The authors

argued that 1) considering the expectation from the U.S. government, in establishing the post-secondary HSI, assumed that the institution required little to no transformation to accommodate for the Mexican American's cultural needs and 2) given that the U.S. government, in 1992, warned the universities that the Mexican American culture lacked persistence (Duncan, 2014; HBCU, 2014) the HSI still has no reason to accommodate the Mexican American student.

Tinto (1975, 2006) clearly admonished the academic community to be aware that the institution's environment, and the students' ability to adopt it as their own, is a key component to student retention. Yet, the perceptions the writer (2006) described in stating that the university and the faculty blamed the student for their failure being a direct result of the students' lack of preparation and persistence are still very much in place within today's academic environment.

Kells (2002) conducted a study which examined the practices of south Texas HSIs in English, writing classes with regards to the attitudes of the faculty towards Mexican American students. She reported faculty engaged in the process of teaching writing to Mexican American students found them to be deficient and incapable of catching up within their freshman year. As a point of explanation, the scholar wrote the ideologies and pedagogies of faculty keep the Mexican American students from being successful as writers in Rhetoric and Composition courses (Khodorkovsky, 2013). Kells (2002) admonishes faculty to facilitate rather than impede the writing development of Mexican American students by accepting that language variances exist, but that they are valid voices within the structure of writing. She went to say that "Cultural and language practices of Mexican Americans misunderstood by the socially dominant Anglo monolingual hegemony indirectly, if not directly, obstruct effective educational program development for bicultural/bilingual students at all levels" (p. 8).

Mack (2006) explained that university faculty blames the academic deficiencies of the Mexican American student on the choices they did or did not make. Faculty ignores the reality that Euro-centric entertainment is not often a viable choice for the Mexican American student and that their school's curriculum may vary from what may be seen a norm for the concept of college readiness. The faculty's perception of the Mexican American student, which is shared, by

and large by the U.S. community, is ultimately that if he/she knew that their goal was to attain a degree from a university, he/she should have prepared and packed their brain with the academic criteria that they would need upon arrival to the faculty's classes.

Mack (2006) attributes the dynamic of self-awareness of the Mexican American students after arriving at the post-secondary institution which leads them to develop a fear of being told that they are deficient. Mack (2006) calls this phobia the "imposter syndrome" which leads to the rationale of accepting that the post-secondary environment is not going to be a viable option for them in the creation of a path for success (p. 60). Mack (2006) goes on to explain that the Mexican American students are aware of the perceptions of the post-secondary institution, the faculty and the U.S. community and that it becomes a difficult dynamic to ignore. Valenzuela (2005) admonished the Texas educational system for not leading students towards academic success, especially those who need bilingual education and/or English Language Learner (ELL) instruction. Texas Commissioner of Higher Education, Paredes (2013) spoke before the Superintendent's Symposium at the south Texas HSI and he informed his audience that out of all the Mexican American children who enrolled into public schools across Texas, 3.9% opted to attend post-secondary institutions (Paredes, 2013).

The Texas Commissioner of Higher Education stated that Texas needs its citizens to embrace the reality that future jobs will require accredited skills attained through post-secondary institutions. By the year 2020, the landscape of the job market will require approximately 60% of the state's population to have attained a postsecondary degree in order to participate in the available jobs (Paredes, 2013).

In five years, the Texas job market will have evolved into an untenable reality for the Mexican American population. Paredes (2013) noted that only 3.9% of the overall Hispanic population of the state of Texas currently attempts a post-secondary education. Given the gravity of the need of the people, the state and of the nation, it should be noted that all of the external perceptions become a stigma which the Mexican American students reject because of the need to panethnically preserve the core of their beings. The macro-collectivism insists that if there is a

judgment of deficiency, it is made against all of the extended family. The Mexican American student cannot stay where the marco-collective family is being disrespected. Along with the rejection of the external perceptions comes the rejection and dismissal of the value of academics.

The history of the Mexican American student within the U.S. has been lost in the amalgamation of the concept of Hispanics. This academic study has clarified the syncretic path taken by the Mexicans who lived on the territories annexed by the U.S. government when it won the war against Mexico in the mid-1800's thus becoming Mexican American. It has been established that almost one hundred years went by before the U.S. government opted to recognize the Civil Rights of these annexed Mexican Americans who were, by then, in the second and third generation of progeny.

The development of the Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) has been a weak attempt at creating an equitable opportunity for the Mexican American student since the HSIs have not been mandated to provide cultural accommodations for the Mexican American student. There is still a wide disparity of cultural mismatch between the student body and the faculty of the HSI in south Texas. A relationship may exist between the Mexican American socio-culture and the Mexican American students' failure rate within a south Texas Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). The perceptions of the Mexican American student imposed by the post-secondary institution's faculty, and by the students, themselves, are definitive factors which lead to the academic failure of Mexican American students. These perceptions lead to the development of a stigma imposed on the Mexican American student. At risk, in remaining within the post-secondary institution is the Mexican American student agreeing with the perception of the institution, its faculty and the U.S. community which leads them to embrace the perception. This self-awareness of deficiency then suggests that their parents, siblings, grandparents and the entire structure which comprises their culture are deficient within the U.S. community. The only reasonable method of attaining emancipation from the stigma of the perceptions of inferiority then becomes the Mexican American's decision to opt to embrace the panethnic, preservation of their culture, by departing from the post-secondary institution.



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