

*CULTURA Y COLEGIO: LATINA/O CULTURAL VALUES, ACCULTURATION,  
CULTURAL FIT, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND ACADEMIC  
PERSISTENCE IN MEXICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS*

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

*CULTURA Y COLEGIO: LATINA/O CULTURAL VALUES, ACCULTURATION, CULTURAL FIT, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND ACADEMIC PERSISTENCE IN MEXICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS*

presented by Rocio Rosales Meza

a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance

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Dedication

*A mi familia, especialmente mi Mami*

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There are many people who I wish to thank for their support throughout this process. First, having my family, especially my *Mami*, Evelia Meza, as my foundation has made this journey possible. She believed in me and encouraged me from the very beginning and although no one in our family had reached high school she always knew that I would and could make it. More times than I can remember, but hold in my heart, my *mami* has supported me, in every way possible. From the time she dropped me off at the airport and waited until I was no longer in sight, to the times when she gave me the little money we had for me to print articles, to checking in with me and my health and sharing my excitement about this project. She always felt guilty for not being able to visit me because she couldn't take time off work, but the truth is she was always with me. I do not have enough words to express my sincere and heartfelt *GRACIAS* for all the support and love she has provided me, it has been the most important thing to me throughout this journey. *Mami, sin ti esto no sería posible, eres y siempre serás mi inspiración y motivación para seguir adelante. Aunque fue difícil estar tan lejos, siempre estabas conmigo en espíritu y en mi corazón, nunca me sentí sola. Gracias por todo tu amor, apoyo, fuerza y sacrificio que hicieron esto, nuestro trabajo, posible. Siempre me preguntan como es que hago todo y la verdad es que no lo hago sola, lo hago contigo. Mi éxito es tu éxito y el de Dalia y Susan, hemos hecho todo juntas. Gracias por siempre quererme y apoyarme. Gracias por todos tus rezos que junto con los de Mami Dina me ayudaron mucho. Mi eterna gratitud y amor por ser la mami y mujer más fuerte que conozco. Eres una mama ejemplar, has sacrificado tanto, y solo espero que haya honrado todo tu trabajo. Te quiero muchísimo Mami.*

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LATINA/O CULTURAL VALUES, ACCULTURATION, CULTURAL FIT,  
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND ACADEMIC PERSISTENCE  
OF MEXICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence that Latino cultural values have on Mexican American students' perceptions of academic persistence, cultural fit, and psychological well-being. Specifically, this study examined the influence of cultural variables, such as Latino cultural values, cultural fit, Anglo-oriented and Mexican-oriented acculturation on the perceptions of psychological well-being and persistence of 440 Mexican American college students. Two simultaneous regression analyses were conducted. The first regression analysis indicated that congruence of personal values and university values and positive perceptions of the university environment significantly predicted students' positive psychological well-being. This regression model accounted for 40% of the variance in psychological well-being. The second regression analysis indicated that high adherence to Latino cultural values, positive perceptions of the university, and positive psychological functioning predicted 30% of the variance in students' persistence decisions. Educational, institutional, and counseling implications are discussed which focus on acknowledging Mexican American students' culture as a strength in their educational experiences.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As early as elementary school, Latinos drop out of school at a much higher rate than *any* other racial/ethnic group in the U.S. (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2003). For the few Latino students who are able to access higher education, very few graduate (Fry, 2002). Fields (1988), one of the first to examine the Latino educational pipeline, described it as "narrow, leaking, and needing repair" (Fields, 1988, pg. 20). Since then, many researchers have examined the educational experience of Latinos; however, the reality is that they are "still marginalized after all these years (Valderde, 2003, pg. 296)."

The low educational attainment for Latino students combined with the demographic changes in the general population highlights the importance of identifying factors that may improve their academic persistence (Anaya & Cole, 2001). Researchers call for continued investigations on the personal, social, and environmental influences of Latinos' experience in higher education (Allen, 1992; Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Solberg, Valdez, & Villareal, 1994; Suzuki, 1994). By understanding and attending to the various factors that may promote Latinos' persistence in higher education, professionals can begin to appreciate the uniqueness of their college experience and will be better equipped to facilitate their success.

Although some research has addressed the Latino experience in higher education, it remains that these students find the university environment to be invalidating and intimidating (Gloria, 1999; Hurtado, 1994; Jones, Castellanos & Cole, 2002; Nora &

Cabrera, 1996; Suarez, Fowers, Gardwood & Szapocznik, 1997). In particular, Latino students experience having to choose between their cultural values and those of the university in order to succeed (Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997). These experiences can be very discouraging for Latino students and impact their decisions to remain in such an environment.

### *Purpose of the Study*

While the literature indicates that cultural values, specifically a congruence of values, may be important to Latino students' persistence and well-being (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Fiske, 1988; Gloria, 1997; Gloria, 1999; Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Gonzalez, 2002), there are no studies that directly measure the impact of cultural values. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine the influence that Latino cultural values have on Mexican American students' perceptions of academic persistence, cultural fit, and psychological well-being. Such information may inform interventions aimed at this population with the hope of enhancing their well-being and persistence, and ultimately their educational experience in college.

While all Latino subgroups experience barriers to their education, Mexican Americans have the lowest college completion rates (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2003). In fact, Mexican Americans fall behind their counterparts at every level of education (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2003). Thus, this study will focus on the educational experiences of Mexican American college students.

Specifically, the constructs under investigation are academic persistence, psychological well-being, university environment, cultural congruity, acculturation, and Latino cultural values. For the purposes of this study, academic persistence decisions will be defined as the students' decision to stay in or drop out of school, using the *Persistence/Voluntary Dropout Decision Scale* (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980). Psychological well-being will be defined using the *Psychological Well-being Short Scale* (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Cultural fit will be defined using the *University Environment Scale* and *Cultural Congruity Scale* (Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996). Acculturation will be defined using the *Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans- II* (Cuellar, Arnold & Gonzalez, 1995) and will measure both Anglo-oriented acculturation and Mexican-oriented acculturation. Finally, Latino cultural values will be defined using the *Latino(a) Values Scale* (Kim et al., 2006).

The psychosociocultural theoretical framework (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003) will be used to guide the research analysis. This theory suggests that in investigating the educational experiences of Latino students, each psychological, social, and cultural dimension be considered simultaneously. Thus, considering these dimensions together provide more accurate perspectives about the educational experiences of Latino students because each dimension is equally relevant and informative and thus provides a contextualized investigation.

#### *Research Questions and Hypotheses*

The specific research questions under investigation are: What is the relation of Latino cultural values, acculturation, cultural congruity, and university environment to students' psychological well-being? What is the relation of Latino cultural values,

acculturation, cultural congruity, university environment, and psychological well-being to students' persistence decisions?

It is hypothesized that Mexican Americans students who have high adherence to Latino values, acculturation to Mexican culture, and negative perceptions of the university environment and decreased cultural congruity will have lower psychological well-being. In addition, it is hypothesized that Mexican American students who have high adherence to Latino values, acculturation to Mexican culture, negative perceptions of the university environment and cultural congruity, and lower psychological well-being will be less likely to persist.

An examination of these issues is critical given that research has found that a cultural fit between Latino students and the university environment increases their academic persistence and psychological well-being (Gloria, 1997; Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005). In summary, in analyzing the various dimensions of the Mexican American college student experience, the ultimate goal is best articulated by Gloria and her colleague (1996) which is “to provide a successful and positive academic experience for [Latinos] where they are able to be congruent with their cultural heritage and values (p.546).”

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

This chapter will consist of four subsections. The first describes the participants of the study. Second, the psychometric properties of the instruments that were used in the study are described. These include the *Persistence/Voluntary Dropout Decisions Scale* (PVDDS) to measure academic persistence decisions; the *Psychological Well-*

*Being Scale-Short Scale* (PWBS) which measures psychological well-being; the *Latino(a) Values Scale* (LVS) to measure adherence to Latino cultural values; the *University Environment Scale* (UES) and *Cultural Congruity Scale* (CCS) to measure comfort and cultural fit in the university environment; and lastly, the *Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans - II* (ARSMA-II) which measures acculturation to both Anglo and Mexican cultures. Next, the procedures will be described in regards to the data collection. The last section will explain the standard regression analyses which were used to analyze the data.

### *Participants*

The sample consisted of 440 (65% female; 35% male) Mexican American college students attending a Hispanic Serving Institution located near the Texas-Mexico border. The majority of the participants were sophomores (32%; n = 143), followed by freshmen (29%; n = 129), juniors (20%; n = 89), and seniors (17%; n = 78). One student did not indicate class level. Students' age ranged from 16 to 49 years with a mean age of 20 years (SD = 3.9). Among the participants, 72 (16%) identified as first generation (i.e., student born in Mexico), 180 (41%) as second generation (i.e., student born in U.S.; one parent born in Mexico), 60 (13%) as third generation (i.e., student born in U.S.; both parents born in U.S.; all grandparents born in Mexico), 83 (19%) as fourth generation (i.e., student and parents born in U.S.; at least one grandparent born in Mexico), and 42 (19%) as fifth generation, and 3 students did not indicate generation level.

The majority of students indicated that they lived at home with family (80%; n = 355), followed by living in off-campus housing with friends (10%; n = 43), and living in on-campus housing (7%; n = 31). Eleven students reported their living arrangements as

other. Two hundred and ninety one of the participants indicated that their relational status was single (67%), followed by having a significant other (22%; n = 91), married or partnered (10%; n = 46), and 5 students indicated they were either separated or divorced.

More than half of the students reported their social class level as middle class (58%; n = 236), followed by working class (27%; n = 108), and upper middle class (14%; n = 58). Two students reported their social class level as upper class and 36 students did not report social class level. The U.S. Census, however, reports that this region has high rates of poverty. Specifically, the median income for a household in the city was \$28,938 and the median income for a family was \$30,634 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Additionally, students' GPA ranged from 1.8 to 4.0 with the mean being 3.0 (SD = .49). The majority of participants (93%; n = 404) reported that they value the degree they are currently working toward. Only 28 students reported that they did not value the degree they are working toward and 8 students did not respond to this item. Three hundred and thirty of the participants (77%) expected to earn an advanced degree beyond their bachelor's degree. The remaining 24% (n = 104) indicated that they expected to earn their bachelor's degree and 6 of the participants did not respond.

### *Instruments*

*Demographic questionnaire.* A demographic sheet was included to gather information about participants' gender, age, generational status, living arrangements, social class status, and relational status. Similarly, questions about their education status included class standing, GPA, highest academic degree expected, and the extent to which they value their degree (See Appendix B). Participants were asked on one item to indicate their race/ethnicity with possible responses being Mexican-American, Cuban-American,

Central-American, Puerto Rican-American, South-American, Spanish-American, African American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Caucasian, Native American, and Biracial. Participants who identified themselves as Mexican American were included in the study.

*Academic Persistence.* The *Persistence/Voluntary Dropout Decisions Scale* (PVDDS; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980) measures the academic persistence decisions of college students. This scale consists of 30 items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*) with higher scores indicating decisions about persisting in college. The PVDDS consists of four dimensions which include intellectual development, peer group interactions, interactions with faculty, and institutional and goal commitments. Sample items include “It is not important for me to graduate from this university” and “I am confident that I made the right decision in choosing to attend this university.”

The coefficient alpha for use with Latino students has ranged from .85 (Gloria, 2006) to .86 (Gloria et al., 2005). Studies have shown that persistence scores were related to scores on measures of perceived barriers that would result in withdrawing from school, confidence in educational degree-related behaviors and moderately related to actual persistence decisions (Gloria et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980). A coefficient alpha of .78 was obtained for scores in the present study.

*Psychological Well-Being.* The *Psychological Well-Being Short Scale* (PWBSS; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) is designed to measure psychological well-being or positive functioning. A shorter 18-item version of the scale was used with items rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*). Higher scores indicate more positive psychological well-being or increased positive

functioning. The scale consists of six dimensions including self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Sample items from this scale include “I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life” and “In general, I feel I am charge of the situation in which I live.”

Internal reliability coefficients ranging from .71 to .73 (Murguia, 2001; Gloria et al., 2005) have been reported for use with Latino students. Validity estimates indicate that psychological well-being scores for the short scale were related to scores on the original scales along the dimensions of self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). In the present study, PWBSS scores yielded a Cronbach’s coefficient of .81.

*Latino Cultural Values.* The *Latino(a) Values Scale* (LVS; Kim et al., 2006) is a 35 item measure of adherence to Latino(a) values. Participants respond to items on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4(*strongly agree*).The LVS consists of four dimensions including Cultural Pride, *Familismo* (Familism), *Simpatia* (Congeniality), and *Espiritismo* (Spiritualism). Higher scores indicate higher adherence to Latino(a) cultural values. Sample items from this scale include “One’s successes should be attributed to one’s family” and “One should be respectful to people who have a higher status.”

A coefficient alpha of .88 has been reported (Kim et al., 2006). In terms of concurrent validity, Latino values scores were positively related to scores on measures of

Mexican-oriented acculturation and self-reported values adherence (Kim et al., 2006). In the present study, LVS scores yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .88.

*Perceptions of the university environment.* The *University Environment Scale* (UES; Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996) examines students' perceptions of the academic environment, in particular their sense of comfort in the university environment. The scale consists of 14 items on a 7-point Likert-type format ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*) with higher scores indicating a more positive perception of the university's environment. Sample items include "University staff have been warm and friendly" and "The university seems to value minority students."

The coefficient alpha for use with Latino students has ranged from .80 (Gloria et al., 2005) to .84 (Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996). Validity estimates indicate that university environment scores were related to scores on cultural congruity (Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996). Studies have shown that university environment scores were related to scores on social support measures (Gloria et al., 1999; Gloria et al., 2005). UES scores in the present study had a Cronbach's alphas of .85.

*Cultural Congruity.* The *Cultural Congruity Scale* (CCS; Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996) measures students' perceptions of the congruity between their personal values and the values of the university environment. The scale includes 13 items on a 7-point Likert-type format ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*) with higher scores indicating greater congruence of values. Sample items include "Given my ethnic background, I feel accepted at school" and "I can talk to my friends at school about my family and culture."

The coefficient alpha for use with Latino students has ranged from .86 (Gloria et al., 2005) to .89 (Gloria & Robinsin-Kurpius, 1996). The coefficient alpha for use with Latino students has ranged from .80 (Gloria et al., 2005) to .84 (Gloria & Robinsin-Kurpius, 1996). Validity estimates indicate that cultural congruity scores were related to scores on measures of the university environment (Gloria & Robinsin-Kurpius, 1996). Studies have also shown that cultural congruity scores were related to scores on social support measures (Gloria et al., 1999; Gloria et al., 2005). In the present study, CCS scores yielded a Cronbach's coefficient of .77.

*Acculturation.* The revised version of the *Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans* (ARSMA-II; Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995) consists of 30 items along two subscales Mexican Orientation Subscale (MOS; 17 items) and Anglo Orientation Subscale (AOS; 13 items). The ARSMA-II assesses behavioral and affective dimensions of acculturation and measure language use, association with and identification with the Anglo and Mexican cultures. The subscales use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely often or almost always). High AOS or MOS scores represent a strong orientation toward the Anglo or Mexican cultures, respectively. Sample AOS items include, "My friends, while I was growing up, were of Anglo origin" and "My thinking is done in the English language." Sample MOS items include "I speak Spanish" and "I associate with Mexicans and/or Mexican Americans."

Cronbach's alphas from previous studies have ranged from .79 to .83 for the AOS and from .87 to .91 for the MOS (Cuellar et al., 1995; Cuellar & Roberts, 1997; Lessenger, 1997). Validity estimates indicate that the AOS scores were related to dominant group subscales and MOS scores correlated with ethnic group subscales scores

(Stephenson, 2000). AOS and MOS scores in the present study had Cronbach's alphas of .60 and .89, respectively.

### *Procedure*

This study was introduced to students during their classes, within the social and behavioral sciences, in the Fall semester of the academic year. Students were invited to participate in the study and were allowed class time to complete the surveys. Almost all students completed the survey. Proper informed consent procedures were followed. Participants were entered into a raffle for a chance to win one of five \$20 gift certificates.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses used to evaluate the research questions and hypotheses established in the previous chapters. Following the data screening process and preliminary analyses that include a MANOVA, this chapter reports the results of the regression analyses. First, the intercorrelations among the predictor variables and the criterion variables are presented. Next, the results of the first regression analysis examining psychological well-being are presented. Finally, the results of the second regression analysis which examines persistence decisions are presented.

### *Preliminary analyses*

Data were examined for accuracy of data entry, outliers, missing values, and fit between their distributions and the assumptions of multivariate analysis. From the original 443 cases of data collected, 3 cases were dropped because of incomplete data. It was determined that the measured variables met the assumptions for normality. Next, gender and generational level differences with regard to the dependent variables of the

study were examined. A 2 (gender) X 5 (generational level) MANOVA was performed with persistence decisions and psychological well-being as the dependent variables, and results indicated that men and women did not differ across the variables,  $\lambda = .99 F(1, 417) = 1.16, p = .31$ . In addition, results indicated that there were no differences across generational level,  $\lambda = .97 F(4, 417) = 1.11, p = .35$ . Thus, the main analyses were run on the entire sample. See Table 1 for the means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for the study's variables.

#### *Intercorrelations among variables*

Correlations among the predictor variables and psychological well-being were examined (See Table 1). Latino cultural values ( $r = .23, p < .01$ ), cultural congruity ( $r = .60, p < .01$ ), perceptions of the university environment ( $r = .42, p < .01$ ), Anglo-oriented acculturation ( $r = .13, p < .01$ ), and Mexican orientation ( $r = .11, p < .05$ ) were significantly related to psychological well-being. More positive psychological well-being was associated with high adherence to Latino cultural values, increased cultural congruity, positive perceptions of the university environment, Anglo-oriented acculturation and Mexican-oriented acculturation.

In addition, correlations among the predictor variables and academic persistence were examined (See Table 1). Latino cultural values ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ), psychological well-being ( $r = .45, p < .01$ ), increased cultural congruity ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ), comfort in the university environment ( $r = .45, p < .01$ ), Anglo-oriented acculturation ( $r = .12, p < .01$ ), and Mexican-oriented acculturation ( $r = .16, p < .01$ ) were significantly related to academic persistence decisions. Increased persistence decisions were associated with high adherence to Latino cultural values, more positive psychological functioning,

increased cultural congruity, increased comfort in the university environment, Anglo-oriented acculturation and Mexican-oriented acculturation.

### *Regression Analyses*

The first simultaneous regression analysis was conducted to determine whether adherence to Latino values, Anglo-oriented acculturation, Mexican-oriented acculturation, comfort in the university, perceptions of the congruity between their personal values and the values of the university, significantly contributed to predicting psychological well-being. The variables together accounted for 40% of the variance in psychological well-being, ( $R^2_{adj} = .40$ ),  $F(5, 434) = 59.51, p < .01$  (See Table 2). Standardized regression coefficients of the individual predictors indicated that increased perceptions of the congruity between their personal values and the values of the university ( $\beta = .51, p < .01$ ) and increased comfort in the university environment ( $\beta = .17, p < .01$ ) significantly predicted psychological well-being. However, adherence to Latino values ( $\beta = .03, p = .44$ ), Anglo-oriented acculturation ( $\beta = .06, p = .08$ ), and Mexican-oriented acculturation ( $\beta = .06, p = .12$ ) did not add significantly beyond the first two predictors.

The second simultaneous regression analysis was conducted to determine whether adherence to Latino values, Anglo-oriented acculturation, Mexican-oriented acculturation, comfort in the university, perceptions of the congruity between personal values and the values of the university, and psychological well-being contributed significant variance to persistence decisions. The variables together accounted for 30% of the variance in persistence decisions, ( $R^2_{adj} = .30$ ),  $F(6, 433) = 33.12, p < .01$  (See Table 3). Standardized regression coefficients of the individual predictors indicated that high

adherence to Latino values ( $\beta = .14, p < .01$ ), positive perceptions of well-being ( $\beta = .32, p < .01$ ), and increased comfort in the university environment ( $\beta = .29, p < .01$ ) all added unique variance in predicting academic persistence decisions. However, Mexican-oriented acculturation ( $\beta = .01, p = .71$ ), Anglo-oriented acculturation ( $\beta = .05, p = .16$ ), and perceptions of the congruity between their personal values and the values of the university ( $\beta = -.06, p = .23$ ) did not add significantly beyond the first three predictors.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss the implications of the results as presented in Chapter 3 and is divided into four subsections. First, the findings of the main analyses will be discussed in reference to possible explanations of the findings and previous literature. Next, implications of the study will be discussed. Following, issues to be considered in conducting future research on Mexican American college students' persistence and well-being are presented. Finally, limitations of the study will be reviewed. The chapter ends with a summary of the study's findings.

#### *Discussion of Results*

This study contributes to psychological and educational research by examining cultural variables related to the persistence decisions and psychological well-being of a sample of Mexican American college students. Specifically, it is the first study to measure the relation of Latino cultural values and Anglo-oriented and Mexican-oriented acculturation to Mexican American students' perceptions of persistence and well-being. Previously identified variables include perceptions of the congruity between students' personal values and the values of the university and perceptions of the university

environment. The main purpose of this study was to examine the influence of Latino cultural values on Mexican American students' psychological well-being and persistence, as previous research indicated that a congruence of cultural values may be important (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Gloria, 1997; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). This information may inform interventions aimed at this population and possibly increase their well-being and persistence decisions.

An overwhelmingly large percentage (93%) of the students indicated that they valued the degree they are currently working toward. Additionally, a large percentage (77%) of these students indicated that they expected to earn an advanced degree beyond their bachelor's degree. These percentages are considerably higher than the reported percentages for Mexican American students (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2003). These findings suggest that these students value their education and may be highly motivated in terms of their education. This information supports their perceptions of persisting in their education. It should be noted however, that the actual matriculation rate for students at the university is 21%. This suggests that while students have high educational aspirations for completing their college education, few students are able to reach this goal. It may be that other factors, such as lack of finances, work responsibilities, poor college preparation, and first-generation college student status may influence the disparity between educational expectations and actual graduation. Measuring their actual persistence may be particularly helpful in investigating whether these students realize their educational plans and expectations and which factors impede or facilitate this process.

The findings must be interpreted in the context of the university's demographics and setting. The university is a Hispanic Serving Institution with 88% of its students being Latino, and it is located near the Texas-México border in a city that is 88% Latino, mostly of Mexican descent (U.S. Census, 2000). Further, the majority of these students live at home (80%) and live no more than 30 miles away from the university. An institutional research profile of the university reports that student services for Latino students, including counseling, orientation programs, scholarships, student organizations, and tutoring are tailored to meet their needs and are heavily used by these students.

Results of the first regression analysis indicate that the variables together predicted a large percentage of variance (40%) in psychological well-being; however, only comfort in the university and perceptions of the congruity between personal values and the values of the university made significant unique contributions to psychological well-being. Latino cultural values, Anglo-oriented acculturation, and Mexican-oriented acculturation did not contribute significant variance to students' psychological well-being beyond the above two variables. It was hypothesized that Mexican American students who had high adherence to Latino values, acculturation to Mexican culture, negative perceptions of the university environment, and decreased cultural fit would have lower psychological well-being. The results did not support the hypotheses; however, the literature supports both perceptions of university environment and cultural congruity as predictors for students' psychological well-being (Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005).

Results of the second regression analysis indicate that the variables together predicted a large percentage of variance (30%) in persistence decisions; however, only adherence to Latino values, perceptions of psychological well-being, and comfort in the

university made significant contributions to persistence decisions. Anglo-oriented acculturation, Mexican-oriented acculturation, and perceptions of the congruity between personal values and the values of the university did not contribute unique significant variance to students' persistence decisions beyond the above three variables. It should be noted however that due to the type of regression analysis, simultaneous regression, these variables did not add unique variance but were related to persistence decisions. It was hypothesized that Mexican American students who had high adherence to Latino values, acculturation to Mexican culture, and negative perceptions of the university environment and cultural fit would be less likely to persist. The results did not support the hypotheses; however, the literature supports perceptions of university environment and psychological well-being as predictors for students' persistence decisions (Gloria, 1997; Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005; Gloria et al., 2005).

The findings suggest that Mexican American students who had high adherence to Latino values, positive perceptions of well-being, and positive perceptions of the university were more likely to persist. In addition, students who felt that their personal values were in congruence with the values of the university and had positive perceptions of the university were more likely to have positive psychological functioning. Taken together, the results support contextualized investigations in addressing the educational experiences of Mexican American students and provide further insight into the findings of previous research investigating cultural variables (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003).

In terms of Mexican American students' psychological well-being, the results support previous research (Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005) indicating that perceptions of cultural congruity were related to positive well-being. In addition to

increased cultural congruence, positive perceptions of comfort in the university were important to students' positive psychological functioning supporting earlier work in this area (Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005; Bennett & Okinaka, 1990). Thus, Mexican American students who were more psychologically healthy felt that the university reflected their values and felt comfortable in the university.

As Mexican American students enrolled in a Hispanic Serving Institution, it may be that being in an environment that supports their culture contributes to their positive mental health (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997). The reflection of Mexican American students' culture is evident throughout this particular university in a variety of ways. Specifically, the university exhibits pictures of Mexican American alumnae as well as that of current students and shows cultural artworks which are visibly displayed among many campus buildings. Moreover, the university also holds and promotes many cultural events throughout the year that focus on Mexican American culture, such as Mexican art exhibitions and Mariachi events that promote Mexican music and traditions. In addition to the visible cultural displays and the enrollment of high numbers of Mexican American students, the university also employs many Latino faculty and staff.

It appears that through the various efforts that reflect the culture of the Mexican American students in this study, the students may feel that their culture is valued. In particular, feeling that their culture is reflected and valued in the university may contribute to their increased comfort in the university environment, and as a result influence their positive psychological functioning. Given this congruency of values between the university and their culture, these students may experience less cultural stressors, such as feelings of isolation, loneliness, and cultural shock (Gloria, 1997;

Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002; Landry, 2002; Rendon, 1992). Having a college experience without these and other cultural stressors may relate to their increased psychological functioning.

Previous research supports the finding that less cultural stressors may result in less distress (Castillo, Conoley & Brossart, 2004; Rodriguez et al., 2000). With less cultural stressors, these students may be less distracted and feel more able to focus, perform well and persist in their education. Additionally, this finding supports previous research that having the university environment as an actual component of one's social support, rather than a barrier, increases students' perceptions about staying in the university (Gloria, 1997; Tinto, 1993).

Additionally, in considering the predominantly Mexican American town in which these students live and the predominantly Latino university in which these students are enrolled, it may be that students' home life is also congruent with their university life. Thus, these students may experience a congruency of cultural values among each of these domains of their life, home life and university life. This experience is in stark contrast to other studies of Latino students in Predominantly White Institutions experiencing two separate lives between their home and campus life (Gloria & Segura-Herrera, 2004). This congruency of cultural values may result in feeling a sense of harmony between their home and school life which all reflect the same cultural values, beliefs and behaviors.

It is this cultural congruency that may result in feelings of comfort in the university. Previous research has indicated that when students' culture deviates from the White, middle class values of higher education institutions, they find themselves in uncomfortable situations. These uncomfortable and incongruent situations negatively

impact Latino college students (Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997). Thus, rather than experiencing these uncomfortable and incongruent situations, the Mexican American students in this study may experience a validation of their culture and cultural values resulting in positive psychological well-being.

Further, while adherence to Latino values, Anglo-oriented acculturation, and Mexican-oriented acculturation were not unique predictors of well-being in this study, the context of the university and setting may provide additional information to understand these findings. As a predominantly Latino university located near the Texas-Mexico border, these Mexican American students may feel that these cultural variables, both Mexican and Anglo, are salient to their lives but not directly related to their well-being. Nonetheless, these findings are not supported by previous research which reports that adherence to cultural values are closely related to psychological functioning (Cross, 2003; Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998). Further examination of the relation of acculturation and cultural values to psychological well-being is warranted.

While previous studies have not measured the relation of Latino cultural values to Mexican American students' persistence, the findings support the conjectures of previous researchers (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Gloria, 1997; Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996; Gonzalez, 2002) that cultural values influences students' persistence. This finding supports previous literature (Gonzalez, 2002; Rodriguez, 1996) that students' culture may provide them with "cultural nourishment" to continue their education. Previous research has also supported the link between Latino cultural values as a protective factor contributing to resilience in education (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997; Hollerman & Waller, 2003; Rodriguez, 1996). Specifically, adherence to these cultural values may provide

Mexican American students with guidance and strength, especially in times of disruption (Hollerman & Waller, 2003). In essence, Latino cultural values may serve to provide Mexican American students with the meaning and motivation to survive and persist in their education.

While behavioral or affective dimensions of their acculturation to Anglo or Mexican culture may not be important for them to persist, their cultural values – *familismo* (familism), *espiritismo* (spiritualism), *simpatía* (congeniality), and cultural pride – may serve as a source of strength. Thus, Latino cultural values are the source from which Mexican American students’ draw support, sustenance, and strength to endure and persist in their education. Accordingly, Mexican American students’ cultural values are an asset in their educational experiences, rather than a weakness as they are usually viewed (Rendon, 1992).

Reflecting on the meaning of the cultural values may offer some information as to how these values may have contributed to students’ perceptions of persistence.

Adherence to the cultural value of *familismo* (familism) has significant meaning for Mexican American students’ academic persistence. Time and again, researchers have documented the crucial role of the family in Mexican American students’ experiences (Gloria, 1997; Flores, 1992; Macias-Wycoff, 1996). The deep feeling for family that permeates Mexican American culture continues as students enter higher education. Having the support of the family is often the single most critical factor that Mexican students’ report as instrumental to their success (Gloria, 1999; Gandara, 1982). Further, countless anecdotal accounts of Mexican American students citing their families as the single most important reason for why they decided to pursue and continue with their

education exist (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Gloria, 1999; Gloria, 1997; Flores, 1992; Macias-Wycoff, 1996). Accordingly, an adherence to the cultural value of *familismo* may serve as both a support in times of distress and as a motivating force for these students to persevere. The powerful influence of family for Mexican Americans should not be underestimated, because the influence of family is an emotional component that is difficult to describe and serves as a powerful force that may contribute to students' persistence (Arellano & Padilla, 1996).

*Espiritismo*, or spirituality, may also have significant meaning to students' persistence as it may serve as a coping mechanism (Gloria et al., 2005). Mexican Americans often invoke their belief in higher powers as a way of making meaning (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). Spirituality often serves to help mollify any neglect individuals may experience (Cervantes & Parham, 2005). Thus, in the context of Mexican American students' education, this may have served to buffer any negative experiences, such as transitions and developmental milestones that students may encounter throughout their college tenure (Gloria et al., 2005). This way of coping may positively relate to these students' persistence as it may help them to endure and continue in their education.

The cultural value of *simpatía*, congeniality and preference for a friendly communication style, may also have an interesting connection to these students' persistence. It may be that in being in a university context that reflects their cultural values, students' may be more likely to encounter people with similar communication styles and preferences. Similar encounters may improve their interpersonal relationships, possibly with other students and professors, through this agreement in communication

and relationship style (Arredondo, 2004). Thus, the students in this study may experience friendly encounters with their peers and professors which may enhance their perceptions and feelings of social support. In fact, it may also be this communication style that garners support from others as it emphasizes cooperation and personal relationships.

Finally, cultural pride may also have implications for Mexican American students' persistence. Mexicans often believe in actions that enhance a sense of pride and often serves as a motivation (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). In the context of being ambitious and goal-oriented, this belief is often invoked. It may be that having a sense of cultural pride raises students to persist in their education because of this desire, determination and connection to their culture. Often Mexican American students' share that despite any obstacles they may have throughout their education, they continue because they want to make their people proud (Lagerway, Phillips & Fuller, 2003; Zalaquett, 2005). Additionally, they may express a desire to prove White culture wrong (Longerbeam, Sedlacek & Alatorre, 2004) by countering all the negative stereotypes against Mexicans. The value of Cultural Pride may then be a powerful force for these students' in that it may serve as their drive to both make their community proud and counter negative stereotypes by persisting in college and "making it."

Equally important to Mexican American students' persistence is a sense of comfort in the university and increased psychological well-being. This finding is supported by previous research that an increased comfort in the university is related to increased persistence decisions (Gloria; 1997; Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997; Gloria et al., 2005). As an institution that may reflect and support Mexican American students' cultural values and in turn create feelings of comfort in the university, it may be that the

supportive and culturally relevant environment is positively influencing students' persistence decisions. This finding also supports previous research that providing a supportive and culturally relevant environment is crucial to students' persistence (Gloria, 1997; Gloria, 1999).

While Latino cultural values may provide students' with the "cultural nourishment" to persist, Mexican American students must also feel comfortable in their university and feel psychologically healthy to stay and complete their studies. This finding is supported by previous research (Gloria, 1997; Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997; Gloria et al., 2005) that an increased comfort in the university is related to increased persistence decisions. If Mexican American students do not feel comfortable in their university and are not functioning well psychologically, their cultural values may not be enough to provide them with the strength to persist. Additionally, for the students in this sample not experiencing cultural stressors may also influence their positive perceptions of the university resulting in increased persistence decisions (Gloria, 1997).

Thus, Mexican American students' cultural values equip them with "fuel" to persist in their education; however, universities must also provide an environment that is equipped to facilitate their success. This finding supports previous research (Gloria, 1997) that states that providing an inclusive, culturally relevant, and culturally affirming university environment is central to the persistence of Mexican American students.

Additionally, Mexican American students' must also feel healthy enough to meet any challenges they may encounter. The literature has documented that Mexican American students experience unique stressors, such as cultural adjustment issues, and cultural invalidation, that have a significant impact on their experience and their

decisions to stay in such environments (Gloria, 1997; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002; Landry, 2002; Rendon, 1992). Having a comfortable university environment may serve to counter these unique stressors. The findings suggest that providing an environment that is congruent with Mexican American students' cultural values may be one way of providing a supportive environment which decreases their stressors and improves their well-being.

A discussion of the consistency of acculturation not being a significant unique predictor in this study to both students' well-being and persistence is warranted. The literature has presented mixed findings on the role of acculturation in both psychological and educational outcomes (Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart, 2004; Cuellar, 2000; Flores et al., 2004; Flores, et al., 2006; Gloria et al., 2005; Hurtado & Gauvain, 1997; McWhirter et al; 1998; Rodriguez et al., 2000). Specifically, previous research has found that Anglo-oriented acculturation is related to high educational goals and college attendance (Flores et al., 2004; Flores, et al., 2006; Hurtado & Gauvain, 1997). Flores and colleagues (2006) suggest that this disparity in the research may mean that Anglo-oriented acculturation is related to certain dimensions of educational choices but not others. Accordingly, it may be that for the students in this study, acculturation to the Anglo culture in terms of being comfortable with educational planning and college attendance that reflects Anglo culture (Flores et al., 2006; Hurtado & Gauvain, 1997) was necessary. However, now that they have "made it" to college and made a commitment to higher education, acculturation to the Anglo culture may not be as important. In terms of these students' academic persistence, Anglo-oriented acculturation is not related to their perceptions of enduring in their higher education experience. Quite the contrary, the

findings of this study indicate that for Mexican American college students, their Latino cultural values are significant to their academic persistence.

These findings support the psychosociocultural framework and builds on resiliency models by acknowledging the culture of Mexican American students in their educational experiences. In addition, the findings support Mexican American students' cultural values as a strength and asset in their education which should be validated and supported for them to persist. With this information, we may increase the retention and graduation rate of Latino college students by attending to their cultural realities and cultural needs.

### *Implications*

Overall, the findings of this study may challenge the many myths and misconceptions of Mexican American college students. Specifically, the findings challenge the myth that Mexican American students do not value higher education and the common belief that Mexican culture is detrimental to Mexican American students' academic success (Retish & Kavanaugh, 1992). Specifically, the belief that adhering to traditional cultural values is an obstacle in their education and Mexican American college students' must leave behind their cultural values to persist (Gloria, 1997; Rendon, 1992).

In particular, the findings challenge the misconception that for Mexican American students to persist in higher education, they must adopt the White, middle-class values of their institutions and leave behind or set aside their cultural values (Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997; Rendon, 1992). In contrast, the results suggest that it is these cultural values that provide Mexican American students with the nourishment to endure and persist in their education. Additionally, it is the congruency of their cultural values with the university

that provides students with a sense of comfort in the university and influences their positive psychological functioning.

The findings offer important implications regarding the role of Latino cultural values and cultural congruence for Mexican American students' success. Specifically, it affirms the belief (Rendon, 1992) that Mexican American students can have success without disconnection from their culture. Currently, academia transmits the subtle yet powerful message that separation, which includes relinquishing your cultural values, leads to academic power (Rendon, 1992). Currently, institutions have either not accepted that this message is transmitted (and rewarded) or failed to recognize it (Rendon, 1992).

The message for universities and higher education institutions is clear; they must begin to think in new ways about whether the traditional academic manner in which education prepares students is appropriate for Mexican Americans (Rendon, 1992). Academia must stop viewing Mexican American students as the "problem child" and acknowledge and appreciate the strength of their cultural values. A call to action for institutions of higher education is made to appreciate Latino cultural values as a strength to be respected and incorporated, not as "deficits that must be devalued, silenced, and overcome (Rendon, 1992, pg. 285)."

Thus, validation of Mexican American students' culture should happen at the beginning, not at the end, of their academic careers (Rendon, 1992). Higher education institutions are known for boasting about their graduation rate of Mexican American students, but often have little to do with actually getting them there. It is critical that a culturally relevant environment is provided as early as possible, as many students may

experience frustration and invalidation by the system and decide to leave (Gloria, 1997; Anaya & Cole, 2001).

Institutions of higher education may learn from the university environment provided by the university where the study was conducted. In particular, other institutions may learn from how Mexican American students' culture may have been reflected in this university environment. The displays of cultural artwork and events that are exhibited throughout the year and among various campus buildings are particularly important as they transmit the message that Mexican American students' culture is appreciated and valued.

In addition, the overwhelming presence of Mexican American students enrolled in the university and the high employment of Latino faculty and staff may also be an important factor. It may be that having a large presence of Mexican American students and faculty may send a powerful message to these students that Mexican Americans belong in higher education. Too often Mexican American students question their role in academia because they may internalize negative stereotypes about Mexican Americans and lack educational role models and positive messages to counter their doubts. Thus, having a strong presence of Mexican American students and faculty may serve as motivation that affirms their role in higher education and may also provide a sense of comfort in the university because they see and interact with other students like them.

Additionally, having other students and faculty from the same ethnic background may mean that students are interacting with others with the same cultural values and communication styles. Other institutions may draw upon the cultural values and interactional style of these students and the university. For instance, having a focus on

relationships rather than the “business at hand” may be important in creating a cultural congruent environment for Mexican American students. Further, incorporating family and Latino culture in the university environment and programs may also be important.

Retention programs and student services that emphasize the strength and importance of Latino cultural values as sustenance to their educational experience are needed. Orientations, workshops, even pamphlets that state and promote the cultural values of Mexican American students may be implemented. One suggestion may be in offering the message “*tu cultura, tu fuerza*” or “your culture, your strength.” Involving the family, through sending home letters that emphasize this message are also important. Currently, Mexican American students and their families may internalize the message that their culture is “bad” and has no place in higher education. Mexican American families may not even be aware that the research literature has acknowledged the importance of the family in the educational experiences of their children. Thus, university literature that emphasizes the importance of Latino culture and the family are important as they reinforce this message to the students and their families.

Sadly, the problem of inflicting pain through providing a culturally incongruent university environment for Mexican Americans’ still continues despite known recommendations (Gloria, 1997; Rendon, 1992; Rendon, 1994). Thus, the key is in actually stating, believing, and transmitting the message that cultural values are a strength to Mexican American students and their families. Even knowledge of this statement and knowledge of these services supports and affirms their values and thus provides a culturally congruent university environment.

Counselors have a critical role in providing a culturally supportive environment (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). In addition to providing culturally relevant counseling that reinforces students' cultural values, counselors can contribute to the environment by entering and actively engaging in the university. This active approach, through providing outreach, reaches students that would not traditionally seek counseling services (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Counselors that are visible on the college campus may also reflect the cultural value of *confianza* (trust) and as a result may be more likely to be trusted as potential allies and advisors (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000).

Essentially, through drawing upon the values of Mexican American students (e.g., the strength of family, spirituality, relationships and cultural pride), the type of environment where Mexican American students are educated can be influenced (Gloria, 1999). Honoring and incorporating cultural values into Mexican American students' college experience is crucial to their well-being and retention. A true commitment that involves institutional support through connecting and validating Mexican American students' culture is needed to ensure a successful outcome.

### *Limitations*

A potential limitation is the generalizability of the study's findings to other populations of Mexican American college students. As Mexican American students enrolled in a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) living in a predominantly Latino town, generalizability of the results to the experiences of other Mexican American college students should be made cautiously. Nonetheless, Hispanic Serving Institutions have a significant role in educating the Latino community in the U.S., with half of all Latino college students enrolled (De Los Santos, Jr. & De Los Santos, 2003). Thus, the

knowledge generated from this study can be of use to a significant portion of the Mexican college student population in the U.S.

Additionally, while the students in this study were at a HSI, the findings suggest that when a university environment is culturally congruent and supportive for Mexican American students', they are healthier and their cultural values positively influence their persistence. This information can be of use to Predominantly White Institutions that recruit and hope to retain Mexican American students.

The range of Latino cultural values assessed may also be a limitation of the study. A difficulty in assessing Latino cultural values has been the lack of reliable and valid measures. The Latino(a) Values Scale (Kim et al., 2006) is a new measure that demonstrates strong reliability and validity in assessing four dimensions of Latino cultural values. As the measurement of Latino cultural values strengthens, future studies would benefit from a varied assessment of Latino values, such as *personalismo* (personalism) and *respeto* (respect).

Another limitation of this study is that it was based on perceptions of persistence decisions. The study did not assess whether these students ultimately persisted in their college education. Additionally, students were assessed at the beginning of the Fall semester. Perceptions of persistence may vary depending on the time of the semester, particularly later in the academic year.

#### *Future Research*

Future research should consider whether the results of this study also reflect the experiences of Mexican American college students in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). It may be that for the students in this study, having their culture represented and

reflected in their home and university life relates to the role of Latino values as a significant predictor of their persistence decisions. In particular, the findings that Latino cultural values predicted academic persistence decisions may not have been found with Mexican American students in PWIs. Thus, examining whether this may be true for Mexican American students in PWIs should be considered in future studies.

Additionally, as this was the first study to examine the role of Latino cultural values to Mexican American students' psychological well-being and persistence, further research is needed. Future studies may also examine the variability regarding the importance of cultural values among participants. In addition, future studies could examine the influence of Latino cultural values with other educational outcome variables such as educational goals and adjustment to college and other psychological variables such as coping.

Future studies would likely benefit from assessing which Latino cultural values contribute to students' persistence decisions. Examining which dimensions of psychological well-being contribute to persistence decisions could also be considered. In terms of the university and cultural fit, further research could investigate which congruent or comfortable situations impact students' well-being. Continued investigations assessing the role, if any, of acculturation to both Anglo and Mexican cultures should also be considered.

As this study assessed the perceptions of persistence decisions, future research would benefit from longitudinal studies to increase our understanding. Longitudinal studies that track Mexican American college freshman cohorts to investigate process and outcome investigations should be considered. Qualitative studies that assess how

Mexican American students' cultural values influence their well-being, persistence, and perceptions of the university may also provide an increased understanding of their experiences.

Additionally, future studies should consider other types of statistical analyses. In particular, it may be that other variables in the study may have also been significant if different types of regression analyses such as hierarchical and stepwise regression were conducted. Thus, other regression analyses and a path analysis may be useful to examine the variables in the study.

### *Summary of Findings*

The findings support cultural congruity and positive perceptions of the university as crucial to Mexican American's psychological well-being. Additionally, the findings indicate that high adherence to Latino cultural values, increased comfort in the university and positive psychological functioning were important to Mexican American students' academic persistence. Thus, when a university environment is culturally congruent and supportive of Mexican American students', they are psychologically healthier and their cultural values positively influence their persistence.

Challenging myths about Mexican culture as detrimental to students' success, the findings suggest that it is these values, and a congruence of these values with the university that helps Mexican American students persist and have a positive educational experience. Hence it may be that universities, when not congruent and supportive of Mexican Americans' cultural values, should be perceived more as a cultural mismatch rather than an individual deficit of the student.

A bridge is needed to embrace and incorporate Latino cultural values so that higher education becomes a reflection of Mexican American students' culture. Validating and integrating Latino cultural values may enhance Mexican American students' well-being and persistence and facilitate their success in higher education. Because the experience of Mexican American students in college is unique, it is imperative to continue to examine these issues. Through this research and continued investigations, hopefully Latino students will soon have a successful college experience without feeling that they are compromising their cultural heritage.

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Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, Ranges, Bivariate Correlations, and Coefficient Alphas for the Measured Variables and Dependent Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	SD	Range	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	$\alpha$
1. PVDDS	3.70	.40	2.47 – 5	--							.78
2. LVS	2.83	.34	1.77 – 3.86	.30**	--						.88
3. PWBSS	4.66	.62	2.67 – 6	.45**	.23**	--					.81
4. CCS	5.96	.84	3.23 – 7	.30**	.24**	.60**	--				.77
5. UES	5.51	.88	2.50 – 7	.45**	.31**	.42**	.43**	--			.85
6. ARSMA AOS	3.81	.40	2.38 – 5	.12**	.00	.13**	.08	.11*	--		.60
7. ARSMA MOS	3.73	.77	1.59 – 5	.16**	.38**	.11*	.00	.18**	.03	--	.89

*Note.*  $N = 440$ . PVDDS = Persistence/Voluntary Dropout Decisions Scale; LVS = Latino Values Scale; PWB = Psychological Well-being Short Scale; CCS = Cultural Congruity Scale; UES = University Environment Scale; ARSMA = Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans, revised version; AOS = Anglo Orientation Subscale; MOS = Mexican Orientation Subscale.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 2

*Summary of Standard Regression Analyses for Variables predicting Psychological Well-being.*

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Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$
1. Latino Values	.06	.08	.03
2. Cultural Congruity	.38	.03	.51**
3. University Environment	.12	.03	.17**
4. Anglo Orientation	.10	.06	.07
5. Mexican Orientation	.05	.03	.06

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$N = 440$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 3

*Summary of Standard Regression Analyses for Variables predicting Academic Persistence.*

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Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$
1. Latino Values	.16	.05	.14**
2. Cultural Congruity	.03	.03	-.06
3. University Environment	.13	.02	.29**
4. Psychological Well-Being	.20	.03	.33**
5. Anglo Orientation	.05	.04	.05
6. Mexican Orientation	.00	.02	.01

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$N = 440$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Literature Review**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

As the representation of Latinos increases in the United States, it becomes more apparent that many issues have yet to be addressed to meet their needs and ensure their success in America. One of the most troubling and urgent issues is the achievement gap between Latino college students and other racial/ethnic minorities, including Whites. The low educational attainment for Latino students combined with the demographic changes in the general population highlights the importance of identifying factors that may improve Latino academic achievement (Anaya & Cole, 2001). Researchers call for continued investigations on the personal, social, and environmental influences of Latina/o students' experience in higher education (Allen, 1992; Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Solberg, Valdez, & Villareal, 1994; Suzuki, 1994).

Although much research has addressed the Latino experience in higher education, it remains that Latino students find the university environment to be invalidating and intimidating (Gloria, 1997; Hurtado, 1994; Jones, Castellanos, Cole, 2002; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Suarez, Fowers, Gardwood, Szapocznik, 1997). To complicate the issue, Latino students are often met with faculty who are predominantly White with little understanding of racial/ethnic minorities (Nora, 2003). Latino students also experience having to choose between their cultural values and those of the university in order to succeed (Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997). With college attrition rates rising for Latinos, it is imperative to explore the factors that influence their academic success.

Various factors including self-beliefs and perceptions, social interactions and environmental contexts and cultural influences need to be considered in assessing the academic persistence of Latinos (Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). In particular, Alva & Padilla (1995) suggest that it is the interaction between personal, sociocultural, and environmental factors that determines Latino academic success or failure. Examining the impact of these variables provides a contextualized investigation which is critical in understanding Latino college students.

To understand Latino academic persistence, the review of the literature will be examined within a psychosociocultural context. Specifically, using an approach in which psychological, social and cultural factors are inextricably intertwined, the review will use the psychosociocultural framework (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000) in investigating the experience of Latino college students. Thus, having psychological, social, and cultural dimensions considered simultaneously provides more accurate perspectives about the educational experiences of Latino students and provides a contextualized investigation (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003). In particular, this review will explore the factors that influence Latino college students' academic persistence. Although a variety of factors and individual variables influence the academic persistence of Latino students, this paper will only focus on several central dimensions which include academic persistence, university environment, cultural congruity, psychological well-being, and Latino cultural values.

Prior to addressing specific factors that contribute to the academic persistence of Latino college students, a brief discussion of the cultural factors or specific stressors that are unique to the Latino college experience is necessary. While these factors present unique challenges for Latino students, they are provided for educational purposes and are

not a focus of this research. For Latinos in particular, cultural expectations, family responsibilities, (Niemann, Romero, & Arbona, 2000) and finances (Hernandez, 2000) are among the challenges of the Latino college experience.

Contrary to the experience of the majority of college students where college is a time to move away from home, for Latino students this is not necessarily true. Family is a core value for Latinos and thus continues to be even while in college. Major life decisions are made with the consent of other family members and there is a willingness to sacrifice for the welfare of the group. Thus, decisions about college attendance and degree completion are made with the family as the priority. For Latino students, cultural expectations such as active family involvement and family responsibilities may serve as additional challenges in their education. Family responsibilities such as taking care of a family member, working off-campus while enrolled in college, and commuting from home are important issues that Latino students must handle. Many potential challenges exist that may discourage Latino students from achieving academic success. Unlike other students, Latinos must confront “dual roles” with regard to family and academic obligations.

Regarding finances, Latino students experience greater levels of financial-related stress (Quintana, Vogel, & Ybarra, 1991). Munoz (1986) stated that the primary source of strain for Latino students is financial because they come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and their parents cannot financially contribute to their education. Limited financial means is a stressor that has been identified as a major dropout factor for Latino college students (Hernandez, 2000). Students reported that familial finances and related financial obligations are central to drop out decisions.

Factors such as cultural expectations, family responsibilities, and limited finances make the college experience for many Latinos unlike other underrepresented groups. However, because the impact of these variables is greatly influenced by acculturation and generation status, their inclusion was considered to be less broadly applicable to all Latino subgroups and thus the examination of these factors is beyond the scope of this review. This review will focus specifically on factors related to self-beliefs, sociocultural, and environmental factors that impact Latino student persistence.

The presentation of this literature review is intended to provide a framework for understanding the experiences of Latino students in college as it relates to their academic persistence. The review of the literature begins with a brief review of the status of Latinos in college by providing current educational statistics. Next, research on the experience of Latinos' in college is reviewed. Following is a review of the psychological well-being of Latino students. Next, factors impacting dropout decisions and factors promoting academic persistence are presented. In particular, a focus on university environment and cultural congruity is presented. Lastly, is a review of Latino cultural values as it relates to Latino college students.

#### *Status of Latinos in College*

Latinos make up 13.5% of the U.S. population, however they represent only 9% of the total population of students who enter higher education. A closer look at the college enrollment of Latinos reveals that 56% of Latino students enters higher education through community colleges and 51% are enrolled part-time (NCES, 2000; Fry, 2002). Further, enrollments at the university level for Latino students are lower, making up only 7% of college students enrolled at 4-year institutions (NCES, 2003).

Moreover, of the Latino students that are enrolled, very few obtain their degree (Fry, 2002). The 2000 Census showed that only 6.9% of all Latino students had graduated from a 4-year university compared to 26.1% of White students and 16.5% of African American students. At the community college level, only 5% of Latino students reported earning an associate degree compared with 8% of White students and 6.8% of African American students. The educational attainment of Latinos at all levels of higher education is the lowest compared to the rest of the population and Latinos are underrepresented when compared to their overall representation in the U.S. Thus, examining the factors that influence Latino academic success in higher education is crucial.

#### *Latino College Student Experience*

Many researchers have examined the experience of Latino students in college; unfortunately, this research presents a dismal representation of what the pursuit of higher education means for Latinos. Fiske (1988) first described the Latino undergraduate experience as “a case of juggling two cultures.” Latino students interviewed in this article described feelings of loneliness, alienation, discrimination, isolation, tensions in adjusting to an unfamiliar culture, culture shock, being misunderstood and pressure to justify their place in college. Students also reported feeling that they had to balance participation in two cultures. One student stated that Latino students “have to fight other barriers [because they’re] from a different culture [and] have pressures not to lose [their] own culture, while maintaining a status quo in this culture (Fiske, pg. 31).” These experiences can be very discouraging for Latino students and impact their decisions to remain in such an environment.

More recent studies have also reported that Latinos continue to experience isolation, alienation, and experience an invalidating and intimidating environment in college (Cervantes, 1988; Fields, 1988; Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996; Gloria, 1997; Hurtado, 1994; Jones, Castellanos, Cole, 2002; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Ponterotto, 1990; Suarez, Fowers, Gardwood, Szapocznik, 1997). Latino students have a difficult time dealing with the academic and social environment of a university because they do not receive adequate support from the university (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). In particular, Latino students are often met with faculty who are predominantly White with little understanding of racial/ethnic minorities (Nora, 2003). Additionally, the academic environment is often discouraging for Latino undergraduates because there is a scarcity of Latino faculty and administrators in higher education who can serve as role models or mentors (Gloria, 1999). In general, for the few Latino students who are able to access higher education, challenging issues such as invalidation, isolation, and navigating hostile environments are elements of their college experience. The negative experiences of Latinos in higher education that is reported in the literature, warrants our attention to their psychological well-being.

#### *Psychological well-being*

The literature on psychological well-being is extensive, dating back to 1948 the World Health Organization defined health as encompassing a complete state of physical, social, and mental well-being. This literature can be confusing considering the various conceptions of well-being and the tendency for researchers to use these terms interchangeably. Among these concepts are the notion of quality of life, subjective well-being and psychological well-being. Quality of life refers to an overall sense of life

satisfaction and well-being (Gladis et al., 1999). Several indicators represent one's life quality which includes well-being, social support, adjustment, physical health status, and standard of living. Raley, Casas and Corral (2004) state that as a global indicator, researchers have struggled to define, operationalize, and measure this construct.

In terms of well-being, there are two major approaches to defining and conceptualizing this concept. Specifically, these major approaches include subjective well-being which is empirically based and psychological well-being which is theoretically based (Lent, 2004). Subjective well-being refers to an emotional well-being that consists of three components including life satisfaction, positive affect, and the absence of negative affect (Diener et al., 2002). The second approach is psychological well-being which poses an integrative definition of positive functioning that includes various aspects of one's life (Ryff, 1995). A focus on psychological well-being is warranted as one of the constructs of this study.

In the well-being literature, psychological well-being has been described as "the striving for perfection that represents the realization of one's true potential" (Ryff, pg. 100). Ryff and Singer (1998) pose guiding philosophical questions to define psychological well-being. These questions include: What constitutes the good life? and What is the nature of human thriving and flourishing? Through this philosophical view of psychological well-being Ryff (1995) poses a multifaceted view of psychological well-being. Specifically, Ryff (1995) states that well-being reflects the following components in a person's life: autonomy, personal growth, acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and positive relations with others.

Nonetheless, this view may present difficulties in that what defines a satisfying life in one culture may not be so in another (Compton, 2001). Critiques of psychological well-being have noted that the definition of psychological well-being is rooted in European culture (Christopher, 1999). For instance, from the perspective of collectivistic cultures, an individual focus of well-being may seem shallow or incomplete without considering psychological linkages between the person and their primary membership groups (Christopher, 1999). Raley, Casas and Corral (2004) specifically call for a “brown understanding” of well-being which takes into account the individual in interaction with the environment; where the individual and the environment are interdependent and mutually constitutive.

Few studies have examined the psychological well-being of Latino students. However, a positive mental outlook has been associated with having the desire to succeed and have more motivation to persist until degree completion (Hernandez, 2000). In particular, Solberg & Villareal (1997) examined the relationship of stress and psychological and physical distress for Latino students and found that efficacy expectations led to less psychological and physical distress. Explicitly measuring psychological well-being, Gloria, Castellanos, and Orozco (2005) found that perceptions of cultural congruity were related to positive well-being. No studies have investigated the relationship between cultural values, psychological well-being and the persistence decisions of Latino students. Conflicting research is presented for how these factors may be related.

Cross (2003) has asserted that culture provides many of the resources for positive emotions and can be a resource for well-being. Specifically, he calls for an examination of

culture from a strengths-based perspective in which culture can and does contribute to psychological well-being. Hollerman and Waller (2003) reported that core values rooted in traditional Latino cultures may be a protective factor contributing to resilience in education. In particular, adherence to these traditional values may provide guidance and strength, especially in times of disruption.

However, ethnic minority status is considered a risk factor for stress and negative outcomes in areas including education and psychological well-being (Zea et al., 1995). Hurtado, Carter, and Spuler (1996) found that experiences of discrimination had a depressing effect on Latino students' feelings of attachment to their institution. The perception of racial/ethnic tension was directly associated with lower levels of personal-emotional adjustment, attachment to the institution, and adjustment in the academic and social realms. Similarly, Smedley, Myers, and Harrell (1993) report that students on predominantly White campuses face specific stressors associated with their minority status and that racial/ethnic minority freshmen exhibit considerable psychological sensitivity to the campus social climate, including interpersonal tensions with White students and faculty and actual or perceived experiences of racism and discrimination. Nora and Cabrera (1996) also report that perceptions of prejudice and discrimination negatively affect the adjustment of the minority students to college while damaging the cognitive and affective outcomes associated with college.

Continued investigations that provide a holistic understanding of Latinos' well-being is needed to understand the psychological well-being of Latinos in predominantly White environments. Current research, however, does indicate that this cultural mismatch negatively impacts persistence decisions and well-being for Latino students (Gloria, 1997;

Gloria, Castellanos & Orozco, 2005). In particular, the literature reports that students who drop out are those that are the least satisfied and most alienated students, whereas the most satisfied and best adjusted students remain (Bennett & Okinawa, 1990). In following the psychosociocultural framework, to provide a holistic understanding of the Latinos' college experience, it also follows that we examine factors that impact Latinos' dropout decisions. Through integrating the person, culture, environment fit we will have a greater understand of Latino students to best serve their needs.

### *Factors Affecting Dropout Decisions*

Along with research that addresses the experience of Latinos in college, the literature has identified many factors that are related to dropout decisions for Latinos. An examination of this literature offers a great deal of information about the experience of Latino college students and factors that may be related to their dropout decisions. For Latinos', dropping out is not an isolated event but may be the final step in a process of student disengagement or withdrawal from the school.

Having to cope with negative environments can result in decisions to dropout, in particular for racial/ethnic minority students at predominantly White institutions (Sailes, 1993). Latina college students also face many barriers that impact their decisions to persist, including lack of financial, social, and faculty/staff support (Gloria, 1997; Haro, Rodriguez, & Gonzales, 1994; Quintana et al., 1991).

Finances can serve as a key factor in decisions to persist for Latino students. Latinos experience greater levels of financial-related concerns and this stress has been found to be a primary concern for Latino students (Longerbeam, Sedlacek & Alatorre, 2004; Quintana, Vogel, & Ybarra, 1991; Munoz, 1986). In particular, this is a concern for

Latino students because they come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and their parents cannot financially contribute to their education. Limited financial means is a stressor that has been identified as a major dropout factor for Latino college students (Hernandez, 2000). Students reported that familial finances and related financial obligations are central to drop out decisions.

Social factors have also been given for the educational disparity between Latinos and Whites and other racial/ethnic minority groups. Specifically, negative self-beliefs, lack of family involvement in education, low educational attainments of parents, feelings of alienation and rejection from school, discrimination, lack of cultural competency, and acculturation are factors that may hinder Latinos' educational achievement (Gloria, 1993; Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997; Lagerwey, Phillips & Fuller, 2003). Another factor involves the presence or lack of racial/ethnic subcultures on campus. Specifically, Tinto (1993) reports that the absence of racial/ethnic subcultures may be one reason racial/ethnic minority students do not persist in college. Studies also suggest that Latinos do poorly in school due to a lack of a culturally relevant curriculum in many subjects. The lack of connection to an academic subject can cause disinterest and apathy and can lead to low academic performance (Escamilla, 1996). Additionally, Bennett & Okinaka (1990) report that Latino students with the least satisfaction with college and the most alienating experiences dropout. Studies also demonstrate that the influence of these factors can be related to the academic achievement of Latinos and that it is the interaction between these personal, sociocultural, and environmental factors that determines Latino academic success or failure (Alva & Padilla, 1995). Taken together, these factors provide additional barriers

for Latino students that can ultimately hinder their academic performance and influence their decisions to dropout.

#### *Academic Persistence Literature*

Other studies on the academic persistence of Latino college students have suggested the importance of various factors in examining their success. Nonetheless, in conducting these studies, the trend has been to investigate the factors in isolation. In particular, academic persistence theories have focused on psychological models that emphasize the impact of individual abilities on drop-out behavior such as intellectual abilities and motivation (Sedlacek, 1998). Through focusing on the individual, these models are incomplete and inaccurate as they ignore contextual variables and the relationship between the student and environment (Castillo, 2002).

Tinto (1987) provided one of the first investigations in examining the importance of academic and social institutions in student achievement as it relates to their persistence. Specifically, he found past theories and models of persistence to be ineffective and ignorant of the role of the institution. His research also underscores the importance of examining the academic persistence of students in context by stating that a student may become integrated into the social environment of the university but leave because they are not able to negotiate the academic domain of the university. In turn, a student may meet the academic requirements but leave due to an inability to integrate into the social environment of the university inability.

Tinto (1993) states that drop out decisions stem from a longitudinal process of interaction between the individual, academic and social systems of the institution. In particular, persistence decisions and commitment to the university are continually modified

based on a student's interaction with other members of the institution and perceptions of the degree to which their experiences are meeting their needs. This view of academic persistence highlights the complex interaction between the student and the university environment.

Additionally, Tinto (1993) states that incongruence between the needs, interests, and preferences of the student and the institution are related to student withdrawal and persistence. Students may experience a mismatch in terms of their interests, intellectual preferences, social values or behavioral styles. An incongruence between the student and the university can greatly impact their decisions to stay.

While this model has been useful in predicting academic persistence for college students (Mow & Nettles, 1996) it has also been criticized for not addressing the cultural realities of racial/ethnic minority students (Tierney, 1996). An understanding of the specific factors related to racial/ethnic minority students is most needed as their educational underrepresentation continues. Given the unique experiences of racial/ethnic minority students (Ponterotto, 1990; Gloria, 1999), models that take into account the factors that are related to their persistence are needed. In particular, in examining the persistence of Latino students, an understanding of the various factors that impact their success is presented.

#### *Factors related to Latinos' academic success*

In examining the academic achievement of Mexican American university students, Vasquez and Garcia-Vasquez (1995) indicated that background variables such as acculturation and the students' culture may make the difference for successful Mexican American university students. However, how these variables can make the difference in

terms of the students' academic achievement was not discussed. Nonetheless, Vasquez and Garcia-Vasquez (1995) did suggest that future research should assess which factors promote adaptation to the majority university environment and which support maintaining aspects of the students' culture of origin. This suggestion points to the importance of the university environment and cultural congruity in success of Latino students.

Rodriguez (1996) examined the addition of college variables, such as academic self-concept, educational expectations, academic major, gender, and family encouragement, to a model consisting of pre-college variables to investigate whether they would improve the prediction of the academic success of Mexican American students. For this study, academic success was defined as first year GPA and first year academic progress. Overall, the college factors significantly enhanced the prediction of academic success for Mexican Americans. Specifically, academic self-concept and academic major significantly improved the prediction for Mexican American students. This study focused on the prediction of these factors for success and not the influence these factors had on their success. Examining how these factors impact the academic success of Latino students would provide information for developing programming to serve the needs of Latino students.

Alva and Padilla (1995) also emphasize the importance of context in examining the academic achievement of Latino college students. In particular, they state that studies of academic achievement must consider the impact that university environment has on the student. Overall, they suggest that there is an interaction between personal, sociocultural, and environmental factors that influences Latino academic success or failure.

Another study examined academically successful Latino students (Arellano & Padilla, 1996) and provided insight into how students use personal, family, and school resources to overcome barriers encountered in their path to success. Arellano and Padilla (1996) examined the conceptual framework of “at-risk” and academic invulnerability with Latino college students enrolled in a highly selective university. Interviews were conducted with the students to examine factors that contributed to their academic success. Students were grouped based on the educational attainment of their parents. The first group had parents with 11 or fewer years of schooling; the second group had at least one parent who graduated from high school; and the third group had at least one parent who completed college.

Through analysis of the interviews, findings indicated that there was a definite contextual interaction between the sociocultural variables and personal and environmental resources that group one and group two respondents accessed to advance along the path to academic success. The researchers emphasized the need for more studies of highly successful students. However, this study defined success in terms of access to college and did not examine the actual performance of these students. While examining factors that facilitate Latino students’ pathways to college is useful, it is also crucial to examine their performance once in the university. Investigating the academic achievement of Latino college students while in college is critical given the rates of students who do not graduate once enrolled (Fry, 2002).

Although these studies provide insight into factors that relate to the success of Latinos’, a contextual understanding of Latinos’ persistence is needed. In particular, there is a need to examine more cohesive interactional models that address psychological,

cultural and environmental variables in Latinos' persistence. To provide a more holistic and contextualized investigation of the persistence of Latino college students, the psychosociocultural framework will be used.

### PSYCHOSOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

It is argued that in examining the academic success of Latinos, it is important to understand the multidimensional components of Latinos' educational experiences. Consequently, it is crucial that the individual, environmental/social context and the role of culture be considered (Castellanos & Jones, 2003). Whereas the literature has identified factors that may be important to Latinos' academic success, a collective examination of these factors remains. Integrating the context of the university setting with the psychological and cultural issues of Latino students will yield a more holistic representation of the factors that affect their academic persistence. It is important to investigate the contextual considerations of the Latino college student experience and how it relates to their success in higher education. Further, examining the impact of these various factors would provide valuable information that would assist in developing a model for academically successful Latino college students.

The psychosociocultural framework addresses contextual factors that contribute to the academic persistence of Latinos which have often been overlooked in the persistence literature. Originally developed for counseling Latino college students (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000) the framework has also been used in examining academic persistence of Latino high school students (Castillo, 2002) and undergraduates (Gloria et al., 2005). Specifically, the psychosociocultural approach emphasizes the dynamic and interdependent relationships of student dimensions (psychological concerns, social support systems,

cultural factors, and university environmental contexts) related to their persistence. This approach assumes person-environment interactions in which each dimension, psychological, social, and cultural is equally relevant to and informative about Latino educational experiences (Castellanos, Gloria & Kamimura, 2006). According to this framework, understanding students' perceptions from multiple dimensions is important when examining academic persistence.

#### *Factors Promoting Academic Persistence in Latino College Students*

The literature on the academic persistence of Latino college students holds that there are variables that positively contribute to the academic persistence of students. The variables that consistently were evident in the literature are family support, peer support, faculty mentorship and positive professor interactions, and positive perceptions of the university environment. A discussion of these factors and their importance to the success of Latino students is provided.

##### *Family support*

In examining factors that contribute to the academic success of Latino university students, Arellano & Padilla (1996) report the powerful effect of parental influence on student's academic success. Each respondent referred to the critical importance of parental support and encouragement. Several of the respondents said that their parents were the most influential motivating factor and continued to be the main force for succeeding in their university studies. Likewise, Flores (1992) reports that the more continuous encouragement there is toward educational endeavors by both mothers and fathers, the more likely the Latino students will persist in college. However, Zambrana, Dorrington, and Bell (1997) contend that family support may not be enough to counteract the

difficulties experienced in college or to overcome the limited financial resources and the institutional barriers that they also face. Consequently, it is important to identify other social variables, such as support from peers and mentorship that are most influential in Latino student's academic persistence.

### *Peer support*

Knowledge that there are other Latino students who are experiencing similar academic and personal obstacles serves to bolster confidence and unity. Hurtado et al. (1998) state that peer groups are critical in students' educational experience. Additionally, Cooper et al. (1998) report that peers serve as important sources of both emotional and instrumental support by encouraging students and assisting them in course work. Although faculty play an important role in the educational development of students, many researchers believe that student peer groups are largely responsible for students' undergraduate socialization process (Hurtado et al., 1998). Thus, it is essential for students to have the support from their peers in order to reach their full potential as an undergraduate, both socially as well as academically. Similarly, Tinto (1993) reports that the persistence of students of color often hinges upon there being a sufficiently large number of similar types of students on campus with whom to form a viable community.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) also report that these peer groups can both meet students' immediate needs and link students to the larger whole of campus life. Specific activities may encourage a broader sense of group cohesion and enhance an individual's sense of affiliation and identification with college. For Latino students who attend predominantly White universities' feeling at home in the campus community is associated with maintaining interactions both within and outside the college community.

### *Mentors and Interactions with Professors*

Mentoring individualizes a student's education by allowing or encouraging the student to connect with faculty who are experienced in a particular field or set of skills (Decoster & Brown, 1982). Mentors also contribute to the academic persistence of students by having them commit to their potential as a student and further excel in their field of interest (Healy, 1997). Additionally, students who experience a high degree of faculty interaction seem to take a far more active role in their own education than do other students (Decoster & Brown, 1982). Tinto (1993) reports that frequent contact with faculty appears to be a particularly important element in student persistence. These contacts appear to be strongly associated with continued academic persistence.

For Latino students, the importance of role models and mentors cannot be underestimated. The sheer presence of Latino faculty who have navigated and succeeded within the educational system proves to Latino students that they can also academically succeed (Verdugo, 1995). Latino mentors can aid Latino students by providing them with guidance, accessing support systems, knowing about different academic or financial opportunities and believing in their personal power and confidence within the academic environment (Gloria, 1999). Professors are also in a unique position to impact the achievement and provide support to students. Specifically, professors who are able to communicate that they are comfortable and approachable in their interactions with students from diverse backgrounds are more likely to earn the respect of their students (Cokley et al., 2004). In attending to the quality of interactions with their students, professors can make the difference for Latino and other racial/ethnic minority students in making them feel connected to the university and persisting to graduation. The need for a culturally

relevant and supportive university environment has been identified as crucial to Latinos' academic persistence (Gloria, 1997).

### *University Environment*

The university environment consists of a variety of factors including the student learning and training environment, academic curriculum, faculty environment, and academic and personal support systems (Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997). Gloria and Pope-Davis (1997) assert that it is crucial that students feel that the university environment is welcoming and provides a culturally relevant and inclusive place for students.

Latino students' perceptions of their university environment have considerable impact on their academic lives (Hurtado et al, 1998). Specifically, Hurtado, Carter, and Spuler (1996) found that experiences of discrimination had a depressing effect on Latino students' feelings of attachment to their institution. The perception of racial/ethnic tension was directly associated with lower levels of personal-emotional adjustment, attachment to the institution, and adjustment in the academic and social realms. Thus, perceptions of the university environment are important to how the student experiences the environment.

Similarly, Nora and Cabrera (1996) report that perceptions of prejudice and discrimination negatively affect the adjustment of minority students in college while damaging the cognitive and affective outcomes associated with college. This finding suggests that how students view the university environment may have a considerable impact on how they perform in college.

Specifically, Gloria (1999) reported that confronting negative environmental contexts could result in decisions not to persist. Thus, understanding perceptions of the environment and subsequent academic comfort of Latino college students is particularly

important in studying academic persistence (Gloria, Kurpius, Hamilton, & Wilson, 1999; Hernandez, 2000). A relationship between cultural congruence and persistence decisions has been found for Latino students which warrants that this factor is also examined (Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996).

### *Cultural Congruity*

A closely related construct to the university environment is cultural congruity, which refers to the cultural fit or match between one's internal values and those of the university environment (Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996). It is critical to also examine the cultural congruence of the university environment to the culture of the Latino student. Thus, a presentation of the findings of the cultural congruity or cultural fit of the university environment to Latino culture will be discussed.

Several studies have documented the positive effects that a culturally congruent environment has on the academic success of racial and ethnic minorities. One particular study found that African American students who attend historically Black colleges and universities report higher GPAs than students at predominantly White colleges and universities (Cokley, 2000). This study potentially demonstrates the importance of examining the cultural environment of the university as it relates to academic achievement. Nonetheless, this study did not directly examine the students' perceptions of the cultural fit between their values and that of the university environment.

Various studies have reported that ethnic minority students experience a cultural shock as they enter predominately White academic institutions (Fiske, 1988; Choi-Pearson & Gloria, 1995). This cultural shock may be attributed to the values inherent in the institution which espouse a White, male, middle-class orientation (Aguirre & Martinez,

1993; Canabal, 1993). Specifically, these values ingrained in the institution promote competition, independence, separateness, and individualism. It is apparent that racial/ethnic minority students would experience feelings of discomfort or incongruence because their beliefs, behaviors, and/or values may differ from those of White academic institutions (Jones, Castellanos & Cole, 2002; Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997). In particular, these values would provide challenges for Latino students whose cultural values underscore the importance of family, community, cooperation, and interdependence.

The research on the experience of Latino students reports that Latinos experience alienation, isolation, and confusion regarding their rights and roles in the academic setting. These feelings may result from being one of the few Latino students on campus and having to constantly question one's ethnic identity, as the student is faced with having to make a choice between their Latino culture and the mainstream White culture (Fiske, 1988; Ortiz & Arce, 1983). Latinos' perception of having to make this choice may result in feelings of being "caught in the middle".

Gloria and Robinson-Kurpius (1996) explain that the Latino student wants to be loyal and to identify with her or his own cultural roots while at the same time wanting to "fit in" and succeed within the values of academia. Latino students are faced with a difficult cultural dilemma that calls for them to choose between their cultural self and their academic self (Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997). It seems that for the Latino college student, a balance between both selves, the cultural and academic self, is challenging because of the incongruity between their culture and that of the university. The values and beliefs of a university minimize student differences and experiences, therefore making the experience unpleasant for many minority students (Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997).

As a result of a non-inclusive university environment, Latino students are faced with the dilemma of feeling that they have to choose between their cultural community and a White university community and academic institution (Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997). Latinos often want to be loyal to and identify with their cultural community, but at the same time they want to “fit in” at school. The homogenous values and beliefs of a university minimize student differences and experiences, therefore making the experience unpleasant for minority students. Often, Latino students experience alienation, isolation, and confusion, regarding his or her rights and role in the academic setting.

Research also has reported that the lack of knowledge of the Latino culture was found to be a significant factor associated with Latino students’ perceptions of racial/ethnic tension and reports of discrimination on campus (Hurtado, 1994). Hurtado (1994) found that the majority of Latino students felt that the students at their institution knew very little about Latino culture. This lack of knowledge or familiarity with Latino culture may cause group conflict among the students as well as a lack of trust between the students and the administration. Moreover, this lack of knowledge may cause Latino students to feel as if they are not important to the university or they don’t belong. These negative feelings may impact Latino students’ decisions to ultimately leave the university. Additionally, a conflict between the students’ values and those of the university may cause distress and impact their psychological well-being. Thus, an explanation of Latino cultural values and examination of their impact on students’ worldview and perceptions is critical to understand their experience with a predominantly White institution to eventually provide ideas to intervene.

### *Latino Cultural Values*

Few studies have begun to examine the relationship of cultural values to Latinos' educational experiences. In particular, Castillo, Conoley, and Brossart (2004) examined the influence of cultural orientation and comfort with White cultural values to Latino students' perceived distress. Findings indicated that comfort with White cultural values were related to lower perceived distress. While the researchers did not promote adherence to White cultural values for Latino students, they failed to examine the role of Latino cultural values.

Another recent study examined the cultural value of fatalism as related to Latino adolescents' academic attitudes (Guzman, Santiago-Rivera & Haase, 2005). Findings indicated that students who were more fatalistic demonstrated less positive attitudes toward education and school; however, there was not relationship with students' GPA. These researchers specifically call for this finding to be interpreted as a cultural mismatch, rather than a cultural deficit.

Numerous studies have indicated that Latino cultural values may also be important to consider in developing interventions for Latinos' retention (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Gloria, 1999; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Quintana, Vogel, Ybarra, 1991; Vasquez & Garcia-Vasquez, 1995) however there are no studies that assess how these cultural values can impact their persistence decisions. An investigation of the impact of Latino cultural values is vital for understanding the experiences of Latino students' given that even for acculturated students, adherence to cultural values remains (Castillo, Conoley & Brossart, 2004). Gonzalez (2002) explicitly stated that Latino students' cultural way of life provides the motivation to persist in academic goals in predominantly White environments, thus an

examination of how cultural values impact psychological well-being is also needed. Appropriately, he asks “If what was meaningful to [Latino] students in the past- their cultural way of life- is missing in the present, how are they expected to survive and persist.” (Gonzalez, pg. 215).

Latino cultural values refer to “cultural scripts” which have been conceptualized as conscious or unconscious culturally significant assumptions on which a group centers its thinking, feeling and behavior. Although Latino subgroups (Mexicans, Cubans, Salvadorians, Guatemalans, Puerto Ricans, etc.) are heterogeneous some common themes have been identified (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). Even while some Latino students can become more acculturated to White culture, they maintain strong cultural identities (Torres, Winston & Cooper, 2003). Thus, an understanding of these values is important considering that cultural factors influence behaviors, emotions, and thoughts (Lonner & Malpass, 1994). Among these cultural values are the values of *familismo*, *personalismo*, and the expression *si Dios quiere* (if it is God’s will).

*Familismo* refers to the deep feeling for family that permeates the Latino culture and often becomes the basis for individual and group decisions (Macias-Wycoff, 1996). In the social organization of Latinos, the family is considered the single most important institution. In general, Latinos have a strong family orientation in that they value close relationships, stress cohesiveness and interdependence, and cooperation among the family (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). The family among Latinos has been a central thread that connects a multitude of strands that make up their social world (Weaver, 1994). Latinos place special emphasis, sentiment, and value on the family when compared to the U.S. population in general (Alvarez Jr., 1994). Even among highly

acculturated Latinos, this family orientation remains strong (“Latinos in America,” 2000). Familism has implications for how Latinos maintain the strength of the family bond throughout their lives and to put the needs of the family before the self.

In addition, the family can be an important resource for Latino students. Terenzini, et al. (1994) report the importance of family in providing encouragement to attend college and to persist and succeed while there. Emotional and financial support from the family often allows students to work toward their fullest academic potential (Leon & McNeill, 1986). Thus, due to the importance of family in the Latino culture, it is critical to examine the role of family support when considering the educational arena, specifically academic persistence, among Latinos.

The value of *personalismo* refers to valuing and building interpersonal relationships and the importance of warm, friendly, and personal relationships (Levine & Padilla, 1980). This describes the orientation that Latinos have toward people rather than toward impersonal relationships (Paniagua, 1994). For Latinos, high importance is given to the qualities of positive interpersonal and social skills such that family members, both nuclear and extended, maintain mutual dependency and closeness for a lifetime (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). Latino children are taught to have a proper demeanor and a considerate, helpful and warm approach towards others (Falicov, 1998). This cultural value can have important implications for how Latinos perceive and respond to environments (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). Specifically, Latinos may experience environments as cold if they do not encounter such an approach in their interactions.

*Fatalismo* or *Espiritismo* refers to a belief system that assumes the notion that little in life is under one's direct control (Falicov, 1998). The expression *si Dios quiere* (if it is God's will) is an indication or form of acceptance that Latinos have no control over what God has willed. This value makes sense given that Latinos often make reference to their belief in higher powers as a way of making meaning (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). In general, this concept refers to the extent to which Latinos feel their destinies are outside their control (Cuellar, Arnold, & Gonzalez, 1995). However, without interpreting this value in the context of religious views, spirituality, and time orientation may lead to wrong assumptions about Latinos (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002).

Specifically, Falicov (1998) states that some studies have indicated that this fatalistic outlook increases psychological distress (Ross, Mirowsky, & Cockerham, 1983) and also result in limited opportunities to get ahead and change life circumstances. Nonetheless, this is a deficit-oriented theory of *fatalismo*. Falicov (1998) states that this outlook may be a strong resource in encountering difficulties in life which is based on a spiritual orientation rather than that of American instrumentalism.

Additional Latino cultural values include *simpatía* and cultural pride. *Simpatía* refers to being congenial and Latinos' preference for easy-going and friendly interactions with people (Falicov, 1998). Cultural pride refers to Latinos' belief in actions that enhance a sense of pride and pride in their cultural heritage (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002).

An explanation of Latino cultural values illustrates their importance in understanding Latinos. Given that these cultural values are central for Latinos', it offers

many implications for their worldviews, how they interpret and perceive environments and situations, and how they make decisions. In particular, for Latino college students, Latino cultural values have many implications for how these values impact their perceptions of the university environment. For example, Latino students may experience a cultural incongruence with the university if they feel that the family is not valued in the environment. Latino students may want to include their family in university activities however, if they feel that their families are not welcome or valued, they will feel an imbalance. Additionally, the university may not understand when Latino students are placing their families' needs before their own. The perception is that the university rewards only individual actions.

Another example of how adherence to Latino cultural values may impact Latino students is that they may perceive the university as cold and unwelcoming if they value personal relationships rather than formalities. This becomes particularly important when a Latino student may be reaching out for help and experiences an impersonal interaction from an administrative assistant, advisor, or professor. Such interactions would probably cause the Latino student to not return to help and ultimately decide to dropout if he/she experiences the whole university in this way. Further, if Latino students believe in and accept God's will, they may appear to have difficulties with a U.S. educational system (Guzman, Santiago-Rivera & Haase, 2005) that places importance on planning ahead and focuses on what the individual can accomplish on their own.

Latino students in predominantly White institutions are in a context of two cultures interacting and experiencing a cultural mismatch, White and Latino (Cummins, 1984; Watson, Bell, & Chavez, 1994). This mismatch in values may ultimately lead to decisions

not to remain in such an environment. Specifically, because there is no cultural fit and the environment is not culturally relevant, Latino students may decide not to persist (Gloria, 1997). Even so, of the students that may decide to persist, feelings of cultural mismatch may negatively impact their psychological well-being.

### *Conclusion*

Latino students experience having to choose between their cultural values and those of the university in order to succeed (Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997). With college attrition rates rising for Latinos, it is imperative to explore the factors that influence their academic persistence. This study aims to examine the relationships that Latino cultural values will have on academic persistence decisions and psychological well-being on Latino college students. An examination of these issues is critical given that research has found that a cultural fit between Latino students and the environment increases academic persistence and psychological well-being (Gloria, 1997; Gloria et al., 2005; Gloria, Castellanos & Orozco, 2005).

In examining Latino cultural values and their impact on academic persistence decisions or well-being we would gain better information about developing interventions that are culturally relevant for Latino students. In addition, the knowledge generated from this study can also provide information about ways, such as incorporating Latinos' cultural values, that we can make the university environment more culturally congruent for Latino college students. In summary, in analyzing the various dimensions of the Latino college student experience, the ultimate goal is best articulated by Gloria and her colleague (1996) which is "to provide a successful and positive academic experience for [Latinos] where they are able to be congruent with their cultural heritage and values" (p.546).

Towards this goal, this study aims to examine the relationships that Latino cultural values will have on academic persistence decisions and psychological well-being on Latino college students. An examination of these issues is critical given that research has found that a cultural fit between the Latino student and the environment increases academic persistence and positive psychological well-being (Gloria, 1997; Gloria, Castellanos & Orozco, 2005). Knowledge of how Latino cultural values impact students' academic persistence decisions and well-being would facilitate the development of specific interventions that are culturally relevant for Latino students.

### CONCLUSION

The academic experiences of Latino college students are greatly impacted by various contextual factors within their environment and culture. Using the conceptual framework of the psychosociocultural perspective provides a much needed examination that incorporates psychological, social, and cultural aspects of Latino students' educational experiences. In particular, this review aimed to provide knowledge that integrates critical factors related to the academic achievement of Latino college students. This perspective provides a more holistic understanding of the experience of Latino college students and generates valuable information that can be utilized at all levels of academia. With a better understanding of the unique educational experiences of Latino college students, researchers, psychologists, and administrators may be more prepared to advance the academic achievement of Latinos.

Because the experience of Latino students in higher education is unique and appears to involve many intricacies in their psychological, social, and cultural selves, it is imperative to continue to examine the impact of psychosociocultural factors that may

facilitate their success in higher education. The need for continued research on these issues and their influence on Latinos' success is critical as Latino students struggle for equal access, achievement, and representation in higher education.

**APPENDIX B**  
**CONSENT FORM**

Dear College Student,

Hola, my name is Rocio Rosales and I am a doctoral student in the department of Counseling Psychology at the University of Missouri-Columbia. I am in the process of collecting data for my doctoral dissertation, advised by Dr. Kevin Cokley. I am interested in studying factors that influence the education of Latino college students. I am inviting you to participate and asking for your assistance in my research by completing some questionnaires.

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study. Your participation will involve filling out some questionnaires. This is estimated to take about 30- 35 minutes.

In addition, your participation in this study could provide much needed information to helping professionals who are interested in enhancing the educational development of Latino students. As a Latino student, it is my hope that through this research we will be better prepared to help students like you in your college experience.

This study poses no foreseeable risks to your physical or psychological well-being. Your participation is solicited although strictly voluntary. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. In order for the results to truly represent the current situation of students from your university, it is important to fully complete the packet of questionnaires. However, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable.

Several steps will be taken to protect your identity in this study. You will not be asked any identifying information on the research surveys. The completed surveys will be kept in a secure location. The results of this participation will be confidential. The data will be summarized and reported only in group form.

Upon completion of the questionnaires, you will have the opportunity to enter your name in a raffle to win 1 of 5 \$20 gift certificates to Amazon.com. At the end of the survey, you will be prompted to fill out a form with your contact information, which will in no way be linked to your surveys. Once the raffle has been conducted, your contact information will be destroyed.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me at [rrwtb@mizzou.edu](mailto:rrwtb@mizzou.edu). If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Campus Institutional Review Board at the University of Missouri-Columbia at (573) 882-9585.

Thank you in advance for your time, cooperation, and participation in this research project! I wish you and your family continued success in your education.

Sincerely,  
Rocio Rosales, M.A.  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of Missouri-Columbia  
16 Hill Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211  
[rrwtb@mizzou.edu](mailto:rrwtb@mizzou.edu)

Kevin Cokley, Ph.D.  
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## APPENDIX C

### PERSISTENCE VOLUNTARY DECISIONS DROPOUT SCALE

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	2	3	4	5

<b>Please use the 5-point scale above and circle the most accurate response:</b>	SD	2	3	4	SA
Since coming to this university I have developed close personal relationships with other students.	1	2	3	4	5
The student friendships I have developed at this university have been personally satisfying.	1	2	3	4	5
My interpersonal relationships with other students have had a positive influence on my personal growth, attitudes, and values.	1	2	3	4	5
My interpersonal relationships with other students have had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interests in ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
It has been difficult for me to meet and make friends with other students.	1	2	3	4	5
Few of the students I know would be willing to listen to me and help me if I had a personal problem.	1	2	3	4	5
Most students at this university have values and attitudes different from my own.	1	2	3	4	5
My nonclassroom interactions with faculty have had a positive influence on my personal growth, values, and attitudes.	1	2	3	4	5
My nonclassroom interactions with faculty have had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest in ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
My nonclassroom interactions with faculty have had a positive influence on my career goals and aspirations.	1	2	3	4	5
Since coming to this university I have developed a close, personal relationship with at least one faculty member.	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with the opportunities to meet and interact informally with faculty members.	1	2	3	4	5
Few of the faculty members I have had contact with are generally interested in students.	1	2	3	4	5
Few of the faculty members I have had contact with are generally outstanding or superior teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
Few of the faculty members I have had contact with are willing to spend time outside of class to discuss issues of interest and importance to students.	1	2	3	4	5

Most of the faculty I have had contact with are interested in helping students grow in more than just academic areas.	1	2	3	4	5
Most faculty members I have had contact with are genuinely interested in teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with the extent of my intellectual development since enrolling in this university.	1	2	3	4	5
My academic experience has had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest in ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with my academic experience at this university.	1	2	3	4	5
Few of my courses this year have been intellectually stimulating.	1	2	3	4	5
My interest in ideas and intellectual matters has increased since coming to this university.	1	2	3	4	5
I am more likely to attend a cultural event (for example, a concert, lecture, or art show) now than I was before coming to this university.	1	2	3	4	5
I have performed academically as well as I anticipated I would.	1	2	3	4	5
It is important for me to graduate from college.	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident that I made the right decision in choosing to attend this university.	1	2	3	4	5
It is likely that I will register at this university next fall.	1	2	3	4	5
It is not important to me to graduate from this university.	1	2	3	4	5
I have no idea at all what I want to major in.	1	2	3	4	5
Getting good grades is not important to me.	1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX D

### LATINO(A) VALUES SCALE

Use the scale below to indicate the extent to which you agree with the value expressed in each statement.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	2	3	4

	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
One does not need to follow one's cultural customs.	1	2	3	4
One does not need to be loyal to one's cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4
One's bond with one's cultural group must be very strong.	1	2	3	4
One must preserve one's cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4
One should never lose one's language of origin.	1	2	3	4
One should work to preserve the language of one's ethnic group.	1	2	3	4
A man must provide for his family financially.	1	2	3	4
One should be able to question one's elders.	1	2	3	4
One should never bring shame upon one's family.	1	2	3	4
One does not need to practice one's cultural celebrations.	1	2	3	4
A man's strength comes from being a good father and husband.	1	2	3	4
One does not need to be emotionally affectionate to familiar individuals.	1	2	3	4
A woman should sacrifice everything for her family.	1	2	3	4
One's successes should be attributed to one's family.	1	2	3	4
A mother must keep the family unified.	1	2	3	4
One does not need to always present oneself as likeable to others.	1	2	3	4
A woman is considered the backbone of the family.	1	2	3	4
One's family is the main source of one's identity.	1	2	3	4
One must not offend others.	1	2	3	4
One does not need to always be cordial to others.	1	2	3	4
One must defer to one's elders for advice.	1	2	3	4

One does not need to have faith in premonitions.	1	2	3	4
One must maintain a sense of interdependence with one's group.	1	2	3	4
One does not need to trust a higher being.	1	2	3	4
One does not need to maintain one's cultural traditions.	1	2	3	4
One does not need to always support one's group.	1	2	3	4
One must help one's group to achieve its goals.	1	2	3	4
One does not need to always avoid conflict with others.	1	2	3	4
A woman must be a source of strength for her family.	1	2	3	4
One should be respectful to people who have a higher status.	1	2	3	4
One should never offend one's elders.	1	2	3	4
A woman does not need to successfully endure all adversity.	1	2	3	4
A woman should be the spiritual leader in the family.	1	2	3	4
One does not need to preserve the customs of one's cultural background.	1	2	3	4
One must be proud of one's cultural group.	1	2	3	4

## APPENDIX E

### PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING SHORT SCALE

**Please read the following statements and indicate your level of agreement by circling the number that best applies.**

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	2	3	4	5	6	

	<b>SD</b>						<b>SA</b>
I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased how things have turned out.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I have confidence in my own opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
The demands of everyday life often get me down.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I like most aspects of my personality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think it is important.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	

## APPENDIX F

### CULTURAL CONGRUITY SCALE

**For each of the following items, indicate the extent to which you have experienced the feeling or situation at school. Use the following ratings:**

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>							<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

	SD	2	3	4	5	6	SA
I feel that I have to change myself to fit in at school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I try not to show the parts of me that are “ethnically” based.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I often feel like a chameleon, having to change myself depending on the ethnicity of the person I am with at school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that my ethnicity is incompatible with other students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can talk to my friends at school about my family and culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel I am leaving my family values behind by going to college.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My ethnic values are in conflict with what is expected at school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can talk to my family about my friends from school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that my language and/or appearance make it hard for me to fit in with other students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My family and school values often conflict.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Given my ethnic background, I feel accepted at school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Given my ethnic background, I feel as if I belong on this campus.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can talk to my family about my struggles and concerns at school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## APPENDIX G

### UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT SCALE

**For each of the following items, indicate the extent to which you have experienced the feeling or situation at school.**

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>							<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

	<b>SD</b>						<b>SA</b>
Class sizes are so large that I feel like a number.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The library staff is willing to help me find materials/books.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
University staff have been warm and friendly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I do not feel valued as a student on campus.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Faculty have not been available to discuss my academic concerns.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Financial aid staff have been willing to help me with financial concerns.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The university encourages/sponsors ethnic groups on campus.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There are tutoring services available for me on campus.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The university seems to value minority students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Faculty have been available for help outside of class.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The university seems like a cold, uncaring place to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Faculty have been available to help me make course choices.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel as if no one cares about me personally on this campus.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel comfortable in the university environment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## APPENDIX H

### ACCULTURATION SCALE FOR MEXICAN AMERICANS – II

Not at All	Very little or not very often	Moderately	Much or very often	Extremely often or almost always
1	2	3	4	5

<b>Please refer to the scale above to answer the following items:</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>VL</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>VO</b>	<b>AA</b>
I speak Spanish.	1	2	3	4	5
I speak English.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy speaking Spanish.	1	2	3	4	5
I associate with Anglos.	1	2	3	4	5
I associate with Mexicans and/or Mexican Americans.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy listening to Spanish language music.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy listening to English language music.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy Spanish language TV.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy English language TV.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy English language movies.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy Spanish language movies.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy reading books in English.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy reading books in Spanish.	1	2	3	4	5
I write letters in Spanish.	1	2	3	4	5
I write letters in English.	1	2	3	4	5
My thinking is done in the English language.	1	2	3	4	5
My thinking is done in the Spanish language.	1	2	3	4	5
My contact with Mexico has been.....	1	2	3	4	5
My contact with the USA has been.....	1	2	3	4	5
My father identifies or identified himself as 'Mexicano'.	1	2	3	4	5
My mother identifies or identified herself as 'Mexicana'.	1	2	3	4	5

My friends, while I was growing up, were of Mexican origin.	1	2	3	4	5
My friends, while I was growing up, were of Anglo origin.	1	2	3	4	5
My family cooks Mexican foods.	1	2	3	4	5
My friends now are of Anglo origin.	1	2	3	4	5
My friends are now of Mexican origin.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to identify myself as an Anglo American.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to identify myself as a Mexican American.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to identify myself as a Mexican.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to identify myself as an American.	1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX I

### DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

**Gender:**

- Male  
 Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

**Relational Status:**

- Single       Married/Partnered  
 Living with significant other/not Married  
 Have a significant other/ not living together  
 Separated       Divorced       Widowed

**What is your race / ethnicity? (Check one)**

- Mexican-American/Chicano       Cuban-American       Central-American  
 Puerto Rican-American       South-American       Spanish-American  
 African American       Asian American or Pacific Islander  
 Caucasian       Native American       Multiracial/Biracial (specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Which generation best applies to you. Check only one.**

- 1<sup>st</sup> generation** = You were born in Mexico or other country.  
 **2<sup>nd</sup> generation** = You were born in USA; either parent born in Mexico or other country.  
 **3<sup>rd</sup> generation** = You were born in USA, both parents born in USA, and all grandparents born in Mexico or other country.  
 **4<sup>th</sup> generation** = You and your parents born in USA and at least one grandparent born in Mexico or other country with remainder born in the USA.  
 **5<sup>th</sup> generation** = You and your parents born in the USA and all grandparents born in the USA.

**Year in college:**

- Freshman  
 Sophomore  
 Junior  
 Senior  
 Other

**Where do you live?**

- on-campus housing  
 off-campus housing with friends  
 off-campus housing with family  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the highest academic degree you expect to earn?**

- Bachelor of Arts or Science  
 Master of Arts, Master of Science  
 MBA  
 J.D (Law)  
 M.D. (Medicine)  
 Ph.D. or Ed.D.

**I value the degree that I am currently working toward (select one):**

- Strongly Disagree       Strongly Agree  
 Disagree       Agree  
 Slightly Disagree       Slightly Disagree

**How would you identify your social class?**

- Working class  
 Middle class  
 Upper-Middle class  
 Upper class

Approximately how many miles is this university from your hometown? \_\_\_\_\_

## VITA

Rocio Rosales Meza is a first-generation Mexican American raised in Santa Ana, California by her mother, Evelia Meza, along with her two younger sisters, Dalia and Susan Rosales Meza. She is fluent in Spanish and enjoys spending time with her family in Santa Ana and Jalisco, México. Ms. Rosales Meza graduated from the University of California-Irvine with a B.A. with honors in psychology, cum laude, and Phi Beta Kappa in 2002. She is currently a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Her primary research interests include Latino cultural values in education and counseling, Mexican American college student development, and multicultural and diversity issues. After completing her doctorate, Ms. Rosales Meza plans to return to Southern California to reunite with her family and give back to her community as a psychologist and educator.