A Follow-Up: School Experiences of Latino/a Students in Rochester, NY: A Community Based Study of Resources, Challenges and Successes

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History of the Study: A Call to Action

- In response to the low levels of educational attainment Ibero convened a Latino Youth Task force in December 2008 to address the issue of student dropouts.
- The invisibility of Latina/o students has been a major concern for Ibero. Concerns about Latina/o students have been documented in two major reports - Access for Hispanics to Opportunities Results in Achievement (AHORA) (1986 & 1999).
Review of Report I: Data

- School Records -- Longitudinal school record database for all 6th and 9th graders from 2003-2004 to 2006-2007 with information about enrollment and grade level status, grades, and test scores.

- 31 Student and Parent/Guardian Bilingual Focus Groups
- Conducted November 2009 – April 2010
- 95 students (ages 11-18)
  - 7 high schools (including several schools within schools)
  - 3 of the local higher education institutions
  - Former RCSD students (either transfer or drop-out)
- 41 parent/guardians
- 9 community sites
Review of Report I: Findings

Findings fall into the following categories:

- **Drop-out**
  - Personal Factors
  - School Factors
  - Environmental Factors
- **Persistence**
  - Personal Factors
  - School Factors
  - Environmental Factors
- **Transition Factors**
- **Educational Aspirations**
Departure Trends

• Latina/o high school students tended to leave school at higher rates compared to elementary school students.
By the end of the 2003-2004 academic year 24% (n=219) of the 898 Latina/o students at 9th grade exited RCSD including:
  – 7% (n=58) either dropping out or leaving the RCSD to obtain a GED and
  – 7% (n=58) leaving to attend a non-public school or a school outside of the district or state.
  – 6% (n=55) of Latina/os 9th graders were expunged from school rosters as a result of obtaining 20 consecutive, unexcused absences, and
  – 4% (n=48) were no longer enrolled in RCSD because of expulsion, being a no show to a RSCD school, departure from the United States, or other reasons including placement in reform school, youth home, jail, or mental institution.
Drop-out Trends

- Between 2006 and 2009 the dropout rates for Latina/o students had decreased.
  - In 2006 48% of Latina/o students were dropouts after 4 years of entering high school.
  - In 2009 36% of Latina/o students were classified as dropouts after 4 years of entering high school.
- Since it takes some students longer to make it through high school, dropout rates increase for each year a student does not graduate.
  For Latina/os in the class of 2007
  - 32% had dropped out after 4 years of high school.
  - 42% had dropped out after 5 years of high school.
  - 47% had dropped out after 6 years of high school.
Focus of Presentation

• Role of community and school based programs
• Issues of violence and fighting among Latina women
• Perspectives of parents and families
The Role of Community and School Based Programs

How does involvement with community and school-based programs influence the persistence of Latina/o secondary school students?
Caring Adults and Confianza

• Caring adults can serve as “institutional agents. They can be formally defined as those individuals who have the capacity and commitment to transmit directly, or negotiate the transmission of, institutional resources and opportunities” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p.6).

• Confianza can be created when students share common experiences, cultural affiliation, and/or language heritage with adults. In these relationships students feel valued by adults.
Persistence Factors

**STUDENT BACKGROUND FACTORS**
- **PERSONAL FACTORS**
  - Family
  - Race/Ethnicity
  - Siblings
  - Social/mental health problems
  - Language and Language Barriers
- **CULTURAL FACTORS**
  - Community knowledge
- **SCHOOL FACTORS**
  - Peers

**RESOURCES (INTERVENTION)**
1. Community-Based Program
   - e.g., American Red Cross Leadership Program
2. Community-School Based Program
   - e.g., Puerto Rican Youth Development Program with in-school advocates
3. School-Based Program
   - e.g., AVID

**MEDIATING FACTORS**
- **INSTITUTIONAL AGENTS**
  - Confianza
- **SAFE SPACES**
  - Teachers/School staff
  - Mentors
  - Racial Climate

**OUTCOMES**
- **STUDENT OUTCOMES: PERSISTENCE**
  - Successful transition from year to year measured by credit accumulation.
  - Remain in school (e.g., no drop-out)
  - Development of educational aspirations.

No participation in community or school-based programs
Confianza and Familial Support

I mean Ms. Gallego, she’s the PRYD teacher. She’s like – I’ve got my own counselor, but she’s like my mother. My other mother. I’m really close to her, and I can actually talk to her and say some secrets.
Interviewer: Okay. So what would school be like without PRYD?

Student 1: Hell. School would be hell without PRYD.

Student 2: I would drop out. To be honest, I would drop out of school if PRYD wasn't here.
Summary

- Persistence is improved when Latina/o students have access to community and school-based programs that connect them to caring adults.
- Caring adults help students to address the structural issues that impede their progress in high school.
- Without access to these programs and adults, Latina/o students report being more likely to leave high school before graduation.
Issues of Violence & Fighting Among Latina Women

How are Latina students’ schooling experiences influenced by acts of violence? How do Latina students respond to these acts of violence?
Why a follow-up with the Latinas?

• Focus groups revealed high prevalence of fighting among Latinas.
• Within RCSD data, Latina students are the young women with higher overall suspension rates when compared to male racial/ethnic counterparts.
• Despite having high educational aspirations, over 40% of Latinas nationally do not graduate from high school.
• Nationally, many Latinas report that their postsecondary expectations are lower than their aspirations, indicating a disconnect between goals and expectations.
• For those Latinas who do matriculate into college, they remain “underrepresented in all levels of formal education attainment,” which includes advanced degrees (González, 2007 p. 291).
Findings

• Stereotypes as Violence: Resisting the “Baby Machine” mentality
• The Environment as Violence: Finding Safe Spaces to Resist
• Physical Forms of Violence: Fighting for Respeto
• Advice to new Latina freshmen
• What college professionals should know
Resisting the “Baby Machine” Mentality

Sofia jumped into the conversation, “To me it’s not that serious. I mean, okay, I’m still a virgin, but when I say it people act like it’s a disease...I’m proud to say it.” Sofia’s words encouraged another student, Lupe to quietly state, “I am too.” Lupe reinforced her desire to remain focused and graduate,

“Six years in high school and I still am [a virgin], and everybody's like, "Oh, you still that?" and I'm like, "Yup, and I'm proud of it." My mind is not set to have sex right now, I just wanna graduate.”
The Environment as Violence: Finding Safe Spaces to Resist

But you hear outside. Let's just say, I go to sleep listening to that noise (police sirens) every day. From what it was the first time I moved here, it was good. You could go out and have fun – go out and not worry about any drama or fighting. I don't go to clubs anymore because every time there's always a fight about something little. I'm the type of person, if I go out, I wanna be able to have fun and not worry about a bullet coming from each angle.
Physical Forms of Violence: Fighting for Respeto

Yo no peleo namá por los rumores porque a mí no me importa, las palabras se la lleva el viento. Pero algunas veces, es que, hay como te digo, es para que tenga tu respeto.

[I don’t really fight over rumors because I don’t care, the wind can take words but it’s about, you know, how do you say, it’s about getting your respect.]
Advice to new Latina freshmen

I’d probably tell them, you know, school is more important cause it is. It’s not just a myth people be saying, it’s a fact and I’d tell them just concentrate on school because that’s actually going to get you somewhere in life not the people around you, not the friends you hang out with or things or the clothes you wear I guess. You got to be concentrating on school...with the violence issue I probably tell them if you’re the type of person to really want to stay away from that, then you should go tell a teacher, the principal or report them, or have peer mediation with them, or you can meet up with them after school and talk by yourselves in the library or something where there’s nobody around, there’s no instigators and all this stuff.
What College Professionals Should Know

I think based on statistics they know that those who make it to college, probably they’re like well she made it, you know, but I think they should know that if we made it that far it’s because we’re serious about our education and that we want to better ourselves. So I think that they should try and help as much as possible ...I mean we can offer a lot, especially being a lot of us are bilingual and just our culture and many of us have been raised like good. I know a lot of Latinas like myself that are on the right track that are serious about school. I mean those who are not, but there’s also a select few that are, so that if we make it to college I think that that should mean a lot to them.
Latina/o Education as a Family and Community Affair

How do parents and guardians interpret and understand their children’s school experiences in the Rochester City School District?

What are the experiences of parents and guardians with the Rochester City School District?
Findings

• Family / School Interactions
  – Positive and Negative Experiences with RCSD

• Parents and family members as advocates, defenders, and protectors

• Resisting Racism, Stigmatization, Silence and (In)Visibility

• Fathers as strategic mediators, cultivators of educación, and defenders.
## Positive / Negative Experiences with RCSD

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**TOTALS** 73 (30%) 170 (70%)
Positive / Negative Experiences with RCSD

Positive experiences centered on:
1) welcoming and positive school climate
2) meaningful and supportive extracurricular activities and programs in school
3) supportive school staff (teachers, administrators, counselors, etc)

Negative experiences centered on:
1) negative school culture (or reputation) and unsafe school climate
2) low expectations
3) lack of college preparation
4) lack of parent support (advocacy/capacity development for parents)
5) assessment and placement
6) inequity in resources
Advocates, Defenders, Protectors

“Yo como o le digo al director, “Okay, me lo tienen que matar o lo tienen que botar sangre, o lo tienen que llevar al hospital para que ustedes hagan algo”

[Like I said to the director (principal), okay, so my son needs to get killed or draw blood, or get taken to the hospital so that you guys do something?]
Resisting Racism, Stigmatization, Silence & (In)Visibility

I think minority kids are looked upon differently. I really believe that. They have this perception that the parents are not – are ignorant, unintelligent, probably on welfare. They have all these misconceptions of who we are. I've worked really hard to be where I am, and to raise my kids by myself, because I've been a single mom for a long time. Don’t undermine my children and me. We're humans, and we deserve the same respect, but to me that's what it comes down to.
Fathers – Balancing Work, Family, & Education

The Hispanic community is sinking. But schools are not to blame, we are to blame. It (education) begins in the home. And unfortunately, we live in a society in which parents have to stay working, working, working. Myself included. I include myself because I work sixty plus hours a week. And my wife takes charge of the home duties and everything. You know, sometimes I don’t have the time, the desire. I can’t have/take the time.
Implications: Community & School-Based Programs

• High quality and culturally congruent community and school-based programs should be available to assist with preventing high school dropouts.

• Schools must ensure that there are adults in schools that can meet the multiple needs of students and who see their role as helping students negotiate the invisible structures of schooling.
Implications: Violence Among Latinas

- *Respeto* equates to challenging the system and the multi-faceted violence embedded within it.

- Survival ensures *respeto*, yet these Latinas also balance strong academic identities used to combat deficit expectations.

- Deficit expectations or deviant identities should not be placed on Latinas if they have encountered issues of fighting.

- Violence occurs inside and outside of school walls and can affect future educational opportunities like college.

- Know Latinas’ history, home, and community contexts.
Implications: Family Perspectives

- Families value education, want to be engaged, and want to be heard – we must find more creative ways of engaging them.
- Latino family engagement can be an integrated strategy across multiple programs, rather than “a discrete activity” (Weiss, Lopez, & Stark, 2011, p.1).
- We recommend attention be given to establishing sustainable community collaboration toward the development and implementation of outreach/engagement policies and practices (i.e. family engagement, college outreach programs, dropout prevention, etc.) strategically focused on improving Latina/o families and student education.
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