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## Appendix A

### Methods

The increasing presence of “Latinos” in higher education presents a challenge to the academy, particularly in understanding their adjustment to the college environment (Umana-Taylor, Diversi & Fine, 2002). “Latinos” represent a growing ethnic minority who share different values, an intensified sense of ethnicity, and minority status, and have a strong need for inclusiveness within the campus environment (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). However, current literature on college students does not significantly provide us with an understanding of “Latinos.” As our presence in post secondary institutions continues to grow, there is a critical need for more research on “Latino” ethnic identity. An area that has received little attention among researchers has been the college experiences of “Latino” students and how these influence the formation and affirmation of ethnic identity. Although a great deal is known about acculturation, assimilation, racism, discrimination and culture, little has been said about how these factors impinge upon the construction of “Latino” ethnic identity and subsequently, the integration of “Latinos” into the academic and social systems of higher education. This study helps fill this gap in the literature.

In conducting this study, my key objectives were to build a theoretical framework that would explain the many complex features of “Latino” ethnic identity. Secondly, I wanted to examine the meanings “Latinos” students construct from their experiences in the college environment, and subsequently, show how these meanings shape the formation and affirmation of “Latino” identity. The decision to utilize an ethnographic approach was guided by the need to generate a “rich thick” description of “Latino” identity. My reference to this study as ethnographic implies that my fieldwork consisted of in-depth interviews that were augmented by participant observations and note writing (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998; Ragin & Becker, 1992). This approach allowed me to examine the nexus between identity formation and social institutions, climates for racial and ethnic differences, cultural identification and practices, and minority status. I spent the better part of five years working within this undergraduate community both as a mentor and participant observer. My in-group status within this community allowed me to build and maintain rapport and trust with the students whose stories I presented in this dissertation.

Following an inductive<sup>1</sup> “grounded theoretical” approach to analyze the data (Becker, 1998; Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Riessman, 1993; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), my intent was to build, rather than simply test theory about ethnic identity. As I collected data, I evaluated and consulted a wide variety of literatures that would best explain my interpretations and formulation of theory. More specifically, the overarching framework for this study was drawn from research on the new “Latino” diaspora (Wortham, Murillo, & Hamann, 2002); ethnic identity theories (Phinney, 1993; Oyserman et al, 2003); subtractive education (Gibson, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999); Coleman’s (1988, 1990) resource-rich networks-referred to as “social capital;” student deficit model (Valencia, 1997); and critical race theory (Delgado & Stefanic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Knowledge derived from this research should provide administrators and educators with greater understanding of “Latino” college students as they attempt to create a campus environment that is ethnically diverse and sensitive to the needs of “Latinos” and other ethnic minority students (Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002).

### *Pilot Study*

This study emerged from my pilot study, whose findings suggested that academic success for a group of “Latino” undergraduates was most often achieved by their ability to contend with discrimination, negative stereotypes, and marginalization. The data from the pilot study revealed that most often it was not just academic ability that facilitated their success, but rather, the ability to continuously transform and reconstruct identity to adapt to a variety of campus environments and situations.

The students’ narratives revealed an array of skills and strategies that were devised and employed to achieve academic success without completely assimilating into the dominant culture of the campus. These strategies had some aspects of resistance to the culture around them and fostered a greater sense of ethnicity, even though they may not have been consciously intentional. Some of these strategies were helpful in that they increased their chances of academic achievement (e.g., networking with other “Latino” upperclassmen in similar academic majors, organizing same-ethnic study and homework groups, recruiting and advising “Latino” peers from neighborhood high schools, and so on.). Other strategies may have been counterproductive or self-defeating (e.g., avoiding faculty-student consultations, absenteeism from class, missing course exams, etc.). These findings served as an impetus for the focus of this

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<sup>1</sup> Data analysis will include narrative analysis, constant comparative, and analytic induction methods.

dissertation in that the data spoke to the need for an in-depth investigation of “Latino” identity and how the college environment shapes and constrains the formation and affirmation of ethnic identity, and ultimately the academic success of “Latino” student.

### *Participant Selection*

A purposeful sample that allowed for maximum variation of participants representing a broad range of experiences and backgrounds was selected for this study (Becker, 1998; Patton, 1990). My sample was drawn from “Latino” undergraduate students at Virginia Tech. I interviewed students from the following categories: (a) gender, (b) academic major or discipline (engineering, architecture, computer science, communication, etc.), (c) grade-point average, (d) immigrant and citizenship status (first or second generation), (e) national origin (Puerto Rico, Cuba, Mexico, South American, etc.), (f) level of involvement (involvement with organizations and activities on or off campus), (g) on or off-campus residency, and (h) alumni. The primary source for identifying “Latino” undergraduates that met these criteria was through the campus Latino Association of Student Organizations (LASO).

LASO is an umbrella organization whose membership is comprised of all Hispanic/Latino student organizations on campus (Circulo Hispanico, Lambda Sigma Upsilon Latino Fraternity, Inc, Latin Link, Latin American and Iberic Graduate Student Association, Sigma Delta Pi Hispanic Honor Society, Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, and Latina Sorority Interest Group). I obtained permission from LASO’s executive committee to advertise the nature of my research and solicit potential participants at their general body meetings.

As a graduate assistant at the university Multicultural Center, I had access to and was actively involved with the various Latino student organizations that are represented by LASO. This provided several benefits for my study. First, my in-group status circumvented the need to rely on gatekeeper(s) to gain entry or access to the “Latino” community. Second, it allowed me to conduct research at an institution and a community that I was familiar with. Lastly, my role as an insider helped to promote trust and confidence between the participants and myself.

### *Issues Related to Studying “Latinos”*

There were several issues that I found unique about the students who participated in this study that merit mentioning. Although I had intended to focus my research on a sample of first and second or later generation “Latino” students, I discovered from my interviews and participant observations, that there existed covert tensions between these “Latino” students and

native Latin Americans who were here as international students. The source of this conflict stemmed from students' perceptions of authentic representation of cultural identity. The Latin American international students perceived themselves as authentic representatives of "Latino" culture and consequently, condescend on first and second generation "Latino" immigrants. This conflict unexpectedly emerged through my interviews and participant observations throughout the study. Because the intensity of this conflict was at times intense enough to create disunity between the two groups, it seems that a closer look at this problem merits a follow-up study. Another issue that was relative to this study was finding participants who were actively involved in extra-curricular activities.

Most of the students that I interviewed were in some fashion or another involved with student organizations or at least had contact with other "Latinos" who were involved. Although there were a few students who otherwise were not involved in student activities, I found it extremely difficult to connect with this population of "Latino" undergraduates. It would have been interesting to learn about the experiences of these students, given their isolation from other "Latinos" in a community where ethnic minorities are so few in number. Their perspectives could have added other dimensions of complexity to the big picture on "Latino" ethnic identity given that their campus experiences may have different from those students who were actively involved in the extra-curricular life of the university.

*The Truth Will Set You Free*" - (John 8:32)

Although this study was focused on the experiences of "Latino" undergraduates, there were many opportunities for growth and reflection for myself. The many stories I heard from the students provided rich sources for deep self-reflection about who I am and how I affirm and articulate my own identity. Having learned about the many complexities of *Latinidad*, I began to find it extremely difficult to want to identify as one. Although my preference had always been to identify first as a Puerto Rican and second as a "Latino," I find myself affirming my Puerto Rican-ness even more now than ever and avoiding usage of the term "Latino." I realize now that if I am going to preserve my own cultural identity, any ascription to such a monolithic label would be counterproductive to that end. However, as Mendieta (2000) argues, I am cognizant of the fact that "this is a term which others refer to us" (p. 47) and not how we refer to ourselves.

Another area of growth for me throughout this dissertation process was finding my own voice to articulate in prose the stories that were shared and the meanings that I derived from

them. Borrowing from Knight, Norton, Bentley, and Dixon (2004), “Storytelling practices are entry points” and “entry points are roles and expectations” (p. 99) that both the writer and his audiences have about what is being written. My role as a researcher was to gather information about the lived experiences of the informants who volunteered to share their perspectives. Moreover, my analyses enabled me to assemble their narrations in such ways that allowed me to extract truths or ideas that I would not have found otherwise (Becker, 1998). My problem was finding a way to give voice to these truths or ideas.

As an ethnic minority graduate student in a predominantly white learning environment, I was rarely allowed to feel as if I had achieved a state of agency where I could articulate my own thoughts, ideas, and truths without facing sanctions. Therefore, the task of writing about the truths shared by my informants was a daunting exercise that entailed learning how to liberate my silenced voice. With the help of my advisor who taught me both the power of qualitative research and the ability to liberate my thoughts, it became apparently clear to me that the most effective way that this dissertation could be written was through the art of storytelling.

In each chapter, I blended the stories and experiences that were told by my participants with the meanings I derived from their narrations. The end result was my own story of the truths shared by the informants and the meanings that contributed to my theory building on “Latino” pan-ethnicity. As the writer of this exploration I provide the stories and you as the reader can make your own judgments about truths and meanings.



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Master of Arts in Education, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, majored in Higher Education and Student Affairs, May 2001 - Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, Blacksburg, VA

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- Provide student leadership development
- Conduct diversity workshops and presentations
- Onsite supervisor for the Multicultural and Black Cultural Centers
- Plan and coordinate annual heritage programs: Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, Gay and Lesbian, Disability, Native American, and Holocaust awareness programs

- Develop partnerships with academic departments to encourage culturally responsive teaching and learning
- Conduct program assessment and evaluations
- Supervise other Graduate Assistants and work study students
- Serve on Search Committees
- Graduate Advisor to the Asian American Student Union

### **Student Development Programs**

Larroy, E. (2000). Discussant, Session on “Does Cultural\Ethnic Racism Exist in the Hispanic Community” - Taking it to the Campus Discussion, Multicultural Programs, Virginia Tech.

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Larroy, E. (2000). Discussant, Session on “Race, Culture, and the Media: Gay/Bisexual Issues and the Media” - Continuing the Dialogue Series, Multicultural Programs, Virginia Tech.

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Research Assistant, Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, Virginia Tech, Summer 2002:

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Research Assistant, Office for the Vice President of Student Affairs, Virginia Tech, Summer 2000:

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- Spring, 2002 – “Dual Code Theory: Levels of Processing, and Memory” (Quantitative Study)
- Spring, 2001 – “Self-Efficacy: How Does it Affect the Academic Success of an International Student” (Qualitative Case Study)
- Fall, 2001 – “Negative Behavior: Does Alcohol Consumption influences it?” (Quantitative/Regression Analysis Study)
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- Supervised one chemist and two waste-water plant technicians

Assistant Manager, Walgreen Company Fort Lauderdale, FL, 1978 – 1985:

- Supervised store personnel, including eight cashiers and four stock and merchandise clerks

**Technical Sales Experience:**

Technical Sales Representative, OHM Resource Recovery, Morrow, GA 1989 – 1990:

- Identified and contracted effective environmental services to company clients

**Social Services Experience:**

Community Center Aid, New York City Housing Authority, NY 1975 – 1978:

- Community Outreach Programs
- Facility Supervisor
- Remedial Teaching (ESL and Reading)