

## **Part I**

**Project Title:** Cultural Discontinuity Scale Development for Mexican American College Students

### **Researcher, Rank, Department and Appointed Date**

#### Primary Investigator

- Heejung Chun, Ph.D., Dept. of Counseling & Educational Psychology
- Assistant Professor, Appointed date: 8/17/2008

#### Co-Investigators

- Chelsea Garcia, Graduate Student, Dept. of Counseling & Educational Psychology
- Isai Navarrete, Graduate Student, Dept. of Counseling & Educational Psychology
- Enilda Sutton, Graduate Student, Dept. of Counseling & Educational Psychology

## **Part II**

### **Impact on Applicant's Personal Research and Development.**

The purpose of the current project is to develop a scale named *Cultural Discontinuity Scale for Mexican American College Students*. The PI has addressed cultural differences that minority students experience in secondary schools. The current project will extend the PI's research agenda by addressing Mexican American college students (MACS) in late adolescence. The development of the scale will lead the PI to seek an external grant such as NIH in order to develop an intervention program that promotes the college retention, academic performance, and wellbeing of MACS.

### **Impact on the Field of Study**

Currently, no extant measure is available that measures the construct of Cultural Discontinuity. It is believed that the development of the proposed scale will facilitate educators

and psychologists to further address issues of academic performance, college retention, sense of belonging, and wellbeing of Mexican American college students.

### **Brief Review of Relevant Literature**

Hispanics is the largest minority group in the U.S. of which 58% are Mexican Americans (Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart, 2004). However, Hispanics are largely underrepresented in the college and university setting, accounting for about 7% of the population in higher education (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998, cited in Castillo et al., 2004). Based on the 2000 Census, just over 10 percent of Hispanics in the country have a college degree in comparison to the national average of 25 percent (Brown, Santiago, & Lopez, 2003). Furthermore, their college completion rate has been reported to be lower than the rates of other racial/ethnic groups. For example, Garcia and Bayer (2008) reported that Mexican Americans' college completion rate is 18 % lower than the rate of Caucasians. It is important to find out what challenges those students face in continuing their higher education.

One critical factor may be related to the differences between home and school cultures. Researchers have characterized the dominant U.S. school culture as a “White middle class” system (Cater, 2006), which is not compatible with the home culture of Mexican American students. They argue that “cultural discontinuity” Mexican American students experience in school settings adversely affects their academic performance (Boykin et al., 2006; Gay, 2000; Howard, 1999; Sue, 2004). Such cultural differences are manifested in language, values, behavioral expectations, and interaction patterns with peers and teachers (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001).

One of the contributing factors to the discontinuity between home and school cultures is family and cultural capital. In particular, parent's level of education, material resources, time

family members have to spend on educational activities, knowledge of learning and educational processes, and comfort with school communication are all found to influence students' academic performance at the primary and secondary level and on to college (Wegmann & Bowen, 2010).

Another line of research has emphasized stereotype threats that Mexican American students experience in university settings. Brown and Lee (2005) hypothesized stereotype threats may pressure Black and Latino students into complying with academic self-fulfilling prophecies. Brown and Lee found that when Black and Hispanic students were higher on stigma consciousness, they had lower GPAs than White and Asian students who are less academically stigmatized. Similarly, French and Chavez (2010) found that stereotype threat significantly predicted a decreased sense of Latino American students' well-being and a positive ethnic identity forecasted Latino American Students' greater sense of well-being.

It is important to understand the cultural experiences of MACS in relation to their college retention, sense of belonging, academic performance, and welling. However, to date no extant measures are available to quantify how MACS face cultural differences or difficulties presented in university settings.

### **Part III: Research Plan**

#### **Setting/Facilities**

Mexican American students at New Mexico State University will be solicited in the current research project. Undergraduate students who are enrolled in generic courses will be contacted for the participation in this study.

#### **Procedures (data collection, data analysis)**

**Method and Data Collection:** The current study will be conducted in three steps. First, focus group will be conducted to gather rich information regarding how MACS feel and process the

cultural differences they experience in daily life contexts, particularly university settings. This information will provide us a deeper insight. Second, based on the findings of focus group and literature review, scale items will be generated. Lastly, the items generated will be included in a survey and distributed to about 500 Mexican American college Students. Fresh and sophomore college students who have Mexican heritage will be solicited for their participation. **Data**

**Analysis:** The data from the focus group will be analyzed by identifying themes relevant to the topic. The collected data from the survey will be analyzed using the explorative and confirmation factor analysis method. Additionally, reliability and convergent validity will be analyzed.

### **Study Timeline**

The study will be implemented in the following timeline:

- IRB approval: March, 2012
- Data Collection and Analysis: April and May, 2012
- Manuscript Development: June to September, 2012

### **Use of findings/dissemination of results**

Once we complete the current study and have findings, we will write and submit a manuscript to a national peer-reviewed journal that addresses Mexican American college students' development and well-being. Additional reports will be provided as stipulated in the grant agreement.

### **Part IV: Budget and Budget Justification**

- Student assistance- data entry: (7.50 \$ x 60 hours) \$450.
- Copying and Printing: \$500.
- Office Supply: \$ 50

- Honorarium for participation
  - \$20 gift card x 20 participants in focus group \$400
  - \$30 gift card x 20 participants drawn \$600

from the pool of 500 survey participants
- Total: \$2000

### **Part V: References**

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