12-2016

Chicanx (Re)-Claiming Identity and Representation Through Education

Katherin Razo-Gomez
California State University, Monterey Bay

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/62

This Capstone Project (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Capstone Projects and Master's Theses at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.
Chicanx (Re)-Claiming Identity and Representation Through Education

Katherin Razo-Gomez
Senior Capstone
Chicano/a Studies
Research Essay
Dr. Wang
Division of Humanities and Communication
California State University, Monterey Bay
Fall 2016
Dedication

To my Mom and Dad, whose “American Dream” is seeing their children receive the education they were never able to acquire. To my siblings Jorge Luis, Viviana and Valeria, you are my strength and motivation. To all the immigrant families, this is for all of you.

“Feet, why do I need them if I have wings to fly.” -Frida Kahlo

Acknowledgements

I’d like to thank the HCOM department and especially Dr. Villasenor for leading me and helping me achieve my goal. For always being so heartwarming, encouraging, and provided feedback necessary for me to grow as a student. Mil gracias!
## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Project Proposal</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicanx Reclaiming Identity and Representation Through Education Essay</td>
<td>6-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>22-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Synthesis Essay</td>
<td>27-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>29-31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Senior Project Proposal

Name and Area of Concentration
Katherin Razo-Gomez, Chicano/a Studies Concentration

Capstone Title
Chicanx (Re)-Claiming Identity and Representation Through Education

Topic
The Chicanx/Latinx student has been underrepresented over the course of the development of the American educational system. This system has been shaped through the lense of the oppressor, the Anglo community. My purpose with this essay is to research the different ways that Chicanx/Latinx students are doing to dismantle the negative perceptions that have been embedded upon us all along. I also intend to focus on what the Chicanx student is doing to move forward in an educational system that has been created for them to fail.

Research Questions
How have Chicanx students been segregated and misrepresented in the school system throughout the years? Has the school system in the United States been shaped to push students of color/minorities and Chicanx students out of the system? What are Chicanx students and other students of color doing to succeed in the educational system? How are Chicanx students claiming or making their identity present in educational institutions from the public school system to higher education. What are some ways they are regaining representation in the public school system? Is there a way forward for Chicanx students and students of color in the higher educational system?

Alignment with Common Theme
The research that I intend to do ties in with this year’s capstone theme about identity and finding one’s self. I have always shown interest in Chicanx students and education. With these two topics in mind, I will focus my capstone research paper in Chicanx students in education and ways they have fought to regain their identity in the classroom and claim representation in education.

Sources:

The sources I intend to use are case studies, narratives, books, and articles from people who are remotely interested in the topic of Chicanx in higher education. I plan to incorporate research studies that prove the importance of community and representation for the Latinx student in education.
Research Essay
Chicanx (Re)-Claiming Identity and Representation Through Education

Section One: Historical Background
The United States is a country composed of immigrants. We have always been immigrants and we will always be, regardless of our citizenship status or how long we have been in this country. As a nation that is composed of diverse communities, we live in a country that claims the acceptance of diversity such as race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, religious beliefs, and so on, however, to what extent are these diverse communities accepted by the dominant Anglo-American communities? Minority groups, such as Latinos, who largely contribute to the wealth of the nation are not given equal opportunities to excel socially, financially, and academically, the same way an Anglo-American is given that opportunity. We see this in the educational public system, not enough Latinxs are enrolling in higher education. We see this once in higher education, not enough Latinxs are receiving the support they should to graduate and enter the world of professionalism. Latinxs more than any other ethnic minority group face obstacles that prevent them from being successful with their academics. The lack of representation in the classroom has led many Latinx students to internalize that their culture, language, traditions are not as highly valued as opposed to the Anglo community. Latinx students learn to accept they are not “good” enough for school which highly influences the decision of not continuing with their education. Latinx students have faced many obstacles and barriers when acquiring a higher educational degree, this however, has not stopped them from acquiring that degree. Speaking from a personal perspective as a Latina in higher education and examining the educational pipeline of Mexican-Americans in the United States, I can argue that the K-12 public school system and higher educational system have been shaped through the lense
of the dominant white supremacy system to push Latinx students out of the system by not providing the fundamental resources and support necessary for a student of color to excel with their academic endeavors. The purpose of this research paper is to analyze the different ways that Latinx students, specifically, Mexican-American students have worked to (re)claim and (re)gain their identity and representation from the K-12 public educational system to higher educational institutions.

In the Mexican-American household, especially a first-generation Mexican-American household, young Latinxs are taught at an early age that education is key to success. The importance of receiving an education is interconnected with the sacrifices that many parents have made by immigrating into this country. To many immigrant parents, seeing their offsprings receive an education is the worthy reward of their “American Dream.” One of the main concerns and pressures of first-generation children of immigrant parents is indeed, to prove that the sacrifice their parents made by leaving their country, roots, and family behind is worth the sacrifice. A way to prove this strong sentiment right is by they, themselves, acquiring the education most parents could not receive in their home country. Por el Sueño Americano. To many Latinx families, education is an opportunity for professional growth, financial stability, and the pursuit of a better lifestyle. Having the urge and want to succeed is unfortunately not enough for a Latinx student to actually succeed in this country.

There are many non-Anglo communities living in the United States that have experienced a great of segregation, oppression, and marginalization within the educational school system. Focusing directly on the Mexican-American community, they more than any other ethnic group have lacked support and representation in the educational system. This constant lack of support throughout centuries has caused a great disconnection between the Latino student with their
identity and education. Moreover, the American public school pipeline is designed for students of color to be pushed out of the system rather than being helped and exposed to the benefits of acquiring a higher education.

Throughout centuries, the Mexican-American community has been victim of segregation, oppression, racial discrimination, and marginalization as a whole. Mexican-Americans have experienced a great amount of under representation in the classroom through centuries. Its early beginnings can be traced back to the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. After Mexico was forced to cede territory over to the American side, this new treaty gave Mexican residents the option to return to their country or declare as permanent resident aliens in the United States. The benefits of declaring as permanent residents came with becoming U.S. citizens in the future, along with being granted all rights of a naturalized U.S. citizen (Strum 4). In reality, Mexican residents did not receive the same rights even after becoming citizens of the country, the segregation and racial discrimination towards them continued. Mexico’s citizens were greatly affected by the signing of the treaty through the removal of their land and also within the educational system for those who were now considered Mexican-American. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is a grounding point in understanding the way the educational system has been shaped for Mexican-American students. One of the goals for this new educational era was to adopt Anglo-American ways while Mexican-Americans remained at the bottom of the socioeconomic strata of American society, (San Miguel, Valencia 358). Keeping Mexican-Americans at the bottom of the socioeconomic strata was a form of economical and educational neglectance. In regards to the educational system, the now Anglo community used a subtractive method of Americanization to implement new identities, ideologies, and methods of teaching in the classroom. The subtractive method of Americanization, as San Miguel and Valencia describe
it was “when the schools devalued particular minority groups and their specific cultural heritages, when they sought to replace these groups’ distinct identities with an idealized American one, or when they sought to remove minority communities, languages, and cultures from the school content and structures (358). The school’s administration would now effectuate their history, language, and culture while at the same time excluding Mexican language, history, culture, and traditions since it was no longer valuable to the educational learning of an American citizen. Mexican-American students were now banned from speaking their own native language, connecting with their culture and tradition, and deprived from learning about their history. In accordance with San Miguel and Valencia, “White educators and policymakers initiated a campaign against diversity,” (361) this was in result of Americans feeling threatened by the Mexican-American community and the potential they could bring to the nation if their culture was implemented in the classroom. Americans also felt the need to strictly implement Anglo ideologies and culture to mark their dominant presence in the shaping of the nation as a whole. The banning of Mexican culture in the classroom was only the beginning to the continuing years of oppression, segregation, and misrepresentation Mexican-American students have faced within the classroom.

During the early 20th century (and in current times) Mexican-American communities were often marginalized and seen as inferior by (native) Americans. When it came to education, Mexican-American students were often separated in the classroom from American students because “Mexican children would impede the academic progress of Anglo children” (Menchaca, Valencia 230) due to language barriers. These strong sentiments over the Mexican-American community increased segregation in the classroom. Other forms of segregation that Mexican-American students experienced was by receiving inferior education. The quality of the education
was much less than the education Anglo students were receiving. If compared to the “White” schools, the learning environment for Mexican-American students was less adequate. Many of the Mexican schools were older, less properly equipped with necessary materials to succeed in the classroom, and teachers were often sent to these schools as a form of punishment or because they were less trained, and less qualified with experience to teach at a predominantly White school (San Miguel Valenica 367). Negative perceptions arose with the poor quality education that Mexican-American students were receiving. The lack of effort teachers and school administration would emphasize in these students lead to the negative perceptions imposed upon Mexican-American students. Students were often categorized as being intellectually inferior as opposed to Anglo students. In most cases, Mexican-American students were placed in low-track or remedial classes because their level of education was not up to the standards of the K-12 curriculum. In addition, instead of being prepared for higher education, the public school system prepared Mexican-American students for vocational school by providing manual-skill training classes. The lack of effort from staff, resources, representation added to the poor school performances of Mexican-American students. Students did not succeed because they didn’t want to, they did not excel in academics because the basic and fundamental resources were not distributed to them in an equal manner. In the eyes of the oppressor (Anglo-Americans), Mexican-American students were a burden to the success of Anglo students, therefore, the process of Americanization through oppression, segregation, and discrimination was necessary to exclude Mexican-Americans from the educational school system and contribute to the success of Anglo students.

Racial discriminations played an important role in the segregation of students of color. Race and tone of skin color was indeed reason enough for students to be separated from White
students in the classroom and be sent off to a less adequate school environment. The establishment of “Mexican” schools in the Southwest of the United States angered many Mexican families who found this to be unfair for their Mexican-American children. A perfect example of racial discrimination in the classroom was the federal court case, Mendez v. Westminster of 1947. When the three of the Mendez children were denied from attending school at Westminster because of their race and ethnicity, their father, Gonzalo Mendez began to take action. The Mendez family along with other Mexican families living in California challenged the racial segregation experienced in the classroom and took Westminster School District of Orange County to court arguing that it was unconstitutional to deny equal educational opportunity to students of color. The court case’s ultimate decision was “the equal protection of the laws pertaining to the public school system in California is not provided by furnishing in separate schools the same technical facilities, textbooks and courses of instruction to children of Mexican ancestry that are available to the other public school children regardless of their ancestry. A paramount requisite in the American system of public education is social equality. It must be open to all children by unified school association regardless of lineage,” (United States Courts 2016). This court case was a way of moving forward in advocating for Mexican-American rights and a form of desegregating schools. After years of racial discrimination, marginalization, segregation, oppression, and lack of equal education in the classroom, desegregating schools was a way of resisting against the dominant Anglo community. The Mendez v. Westminster case in a sense reclaimed and regained their Mexican-American presence in the K-12 public school system.

The Mendez v. Westminster is only of of the many ways that the Mexican-American community revolutionized to keep their culture and identity present. Later on in the year we had
the Chicano Movement of the 1960s which had a major impact on the Mexican-American community. This was also a grounding point in revolutionizing the Americanized educational ideologies embedded upon us. Transitioning into more current times, the Chicano student still continues to be underrepresented and this, unfortunately, sets up the student for failure in the educational system. By simply being part of the educational system the Chicanx student is already making their existence and identity as Mexican-Americans present. The real question here is, what are Chicanx/Latinx students doing to move forward in an educational system that was created ideally for the Anglo student and how are they keeping their identity alive? Section two of this essay focuses on the different forms that Latinx students continue to be marginalized, though it may not be as extreme as generations ago, they are still marginalized and racially targeted in the classroom. This section focuses on ways to dismantle the negative perceptions imposed on us by the oppressor but at the same time, working towards a progressive and inclusive educational system for the Latinx student.

Section Two: Latinx Moving Forward

Racial discrimination in the classroom has been embedded into the American educational school system in which the Anglo community, them being the oppressors, impose discriminatory remarks towards Latinx and other students of color. This has been a part of history in the Latinx community as early as the Treaty Signing of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the development of the ideal American educational system to a more current educational era. Opportunities such as education have been limited and almost impossible to attain for Latinos because of the negative perceptions that Anglos have of us and simply because the Americanized school system has been shaped to push students of color out. All of these negative connotations have contributed to the educational barriers and inequities that marginalize communities, like Latinx. This, however, has not been a detrimental factor for Latinx students to not achieve their academic endeavors.
Whether there is a way forward for Latinx students in higher education depends on the determination and willingness to succeed as a Latinx community in this marginalized educational system.

In the Latinx household, education is key to success. Latino parents have high expectations for their children to acquire a higher educational degree. One is taught at an early age that the only way to succeed in this country is by receiving an education in order to obtain a stable and successful life. This is used as a constant reminder, in most cases because parents themselves were not able to attain that education that was once desired. Unfortunately, the will and high expectations set by parents and students is sometimes not enough. Although parents and children share high educational aims, their aspirations do not necessarily translate into postsecondary matriculation. This is especially the case for Hispanic high school students, particularly those whose parents have not attended college, (Schneider, Martinez, Owes 2006). Latinx students are confronted with educational challenges before and even once entering the educational system. As minorities continue to grow and expand throughout the nation so does the “possibility” of attending a higher educational institution. This, however comes with high costs of educational inequities and disparities for Latinx students in the educational system. Many are faced with the burdens of being the first in their family to attend college, the lack of Latinx faculty and staff representation in academia, and the lack of community within the students are some of the many burdens that Latinx students face. Regardless of the educational inequities that Latinx students face, the fact that students make it into an Americanized educational system is a starting point to move forward in academia.

When it comes to education, the Chicano or Latino student is often faced challenges that impede the student from successfully excelling in higher education. Challenges such as being a
first-generation college student come with downsides. Although this is a stepping stone towards the direction of a successful lifestyle, not having parental educational background experience in higher education can interfere with the student and its college experience. As a first-generation college student I felt at disadvantage when it came to needing additional support in financial aid assistance, or selecting the ‘right’ campus, and even major. My parents could not help me, not because they didn’t have the desire but because they too, did not know about the college process.

Once accepted into the university, the transition I had from high school to college was rather challenging. Although I had attended orientation and participated in all campus events prior to the semester starting, this was still not enough to make my transition smoother. I faced obstacles because I was not well aware of the campus environment I was entering. Although I struggled, instead of feeling inferior because of my disadvantage of being a first-generation, I took advantage of that “disadvantage.” Being the first in my family to even consider college was empowering and definitely gave me the strength although I lacked knowledge. In accordance with Ventajas y Conocimientos, a study lead by COEHD, “the fact that students managed to deal with complex transitional issues speaks to their intelligence and sheer determination to stay in college,” (COEHD 9). Determination is indeed what keeps us Latinx students going in higher education.

The Latinx community continues to be marginalized in different forms regardless of the how hard we work to dismantle the oppressive educational system that has followed us all along. One of the main concerns for the Latinx student in the educational system is the lack of strong staff and Latinx representation. For us, who are already in the system, it is fundamental to have the support from faculty and staff who have already been through the process of acquiring a higher educational degree. Support and motivation keeps the Latinx student engaged with their
academics. In higher education, I find a connection with the faculty to be a fundamental factor in us continuing to excel. When a student starts to feel disconnected from the classroom, professor, and university itself, the possibilities of failure increase. In “It Could Be Just Because I’m Different”: Otherness and Its Outcomes in Doctoral Education, that “the sense of being different from one’s major advisor or other influential faculty members may contribute to a sense of being unlikely to accomplish success not because of lack of interest or talent, but because of differences that threaten one’s chance of obtaining full support or endorsement from advisors and scholar’s in one’s field,” (Pifer, Baker 20). The lack of connection interconnects with the students lack of success and at the same time it makes the student doubt their own ability in higher education. Focusing specifically in the Latinx community and given our historical background in education, Latinx students in the system need additional support from faculty and staff to help us reassure our strengths and abilities. The COEHD study from Ventajas y Conocimientos recalls how advisers and counselors should form validating and mentoring relationships with students to fine tune their aspirations and to affirm that they have the capacities and strengths to realize their hopes and dreams, (COEHD 22). The Latinx student needs that additional support from faculty and staff. Reassurance and a connection with our mentors plays an important role to our education given that most of us are first-generation college students. Being able to connect with faculty only encourages us to continue with our education. If they can do it, then so can we. I owe a majority of my success in higher education to my Chicano Studies professor and advisor during my undergraduate degree. Dr. Villasenor was an inspiration for me to continue striving for success. Despite the challenges I faced in undergrad, having that strong connection with a faculty at my university encouraged me even more to get to the finish line.
Other forms that interfere with the success of the Latinx student in academia are the continuous micro-aggressions experienced by the student in the classroom. In accordance with Alejandro Covarrubias in *Quantitative Intersectionality: A Critical Race Analysis of the Chicana/o Educational Pipeline*, the relationship systems that use these identifiers such as racism, sexism, nativism, class-based discrimination, etc., also intersect in people’s daily lives so that they have the potential to simultaneously create privilege and oppressive conditions for the same individuals within different conditions (Covarrubias 88). The Latinx student is often labeled on the oppressive side of the spectrum and that has negative consequences in regards to the educational opportunities the student may have. Racial micro-aggressions such as creating a hostile class environment by peers or making “non-offensive” racial remarks about one’s race or ethnicity create a negative effect in the student who is the receiver of these negative perceptions.

Being the one of the few Chicanx Studies student under the Human Communication major at CSUMB I, too, experienced racial discriminatory remarks in the classroom. Given that not many courses were offered for Chicanx Studies students because not many showed interest in the concentration, I needed to take other courses to fulfill my major requirements. In classes that focused on communication skills, diversity, and social justice, I would have thought that students in my major would be more accepting to the different ethnicities in the classroom or even the fact that Chicanx Studies is an actual field of study. This was not the case, instead I often found myself hearing whispers or remarks such as “oh but that’s because she’s Mexican.” It is unbelievable to think how my race and ethnicity played an important role to the label that my peers imposed on me. In their eyes, my intellectual ability to succeed in the classroom was not enough. In his case study exploration on how Latinx students experience racial micro-aggressions and the impact this may have to their education, Eric Felix concludes with racial
micro-aggression cause a tiring effect and increased sense of discouragement and helplessness for students of color (Felix 2011). Students who experience racial aggressions experienced negative effects with their academic performance along with leading them to want to “drop out” or transfer to a more inclusive university. I, too, experienced these thoughts, this sense of not belonging in the classroom, but on the contrary, I used this as an empowering weapon to continue with my education. The Latinx student needs to feel that sense of belonging to educational environment for them to successfully finish the path of academia they have entered.

Aside from the marginalized system us, Latinx students come across with, I strongly believe that there is a way forward for those already in the educational system and for the ones who follow our path. The real question is; how do we (Latinx student) widen up the path for the generations that follow us? How do we as Latinx dismantle the Americanized racial ideologies that have been imposed on us? Although I strongly believe that the Latinx student continues to push forward, I don’t believe that the negative stereotypes will diminish all at once. The fact that we are already in higher education is indeed evidence that we can succeed in a system that was initially created for Anglo students. It is a form of revolution, Latinx in higher education signify strength, power, and willingness to succeed.

Alejandro Covarrubias concludes how the system has been shaped to fail the Latinx or Chicanx student. He states, “Latinas/os, two thirds of whom are of Mexican origin, have been the largest minority group in the United States for more than a decade, yet they continue to be the most poorly served by the American educational institutions, (Covarrubias 103). Although this is an unfortunately reality, we can’t deny the limited academic resources provided to us. Focusing on our strengths rather than our disadvantages as students of color can have a much more enriching effect as opposed to only focusing on the negative aspects that follow us. The truth is
that racial discrimination, marginalization, and other negative connotations have been embedded in the Americanized school system and although dismantling these perceptions has taken us this far, it is still not enough. One step into moving forward is by creating dialogue about racial and social concerns that affect us, even if the impact is not as a whole, we would be bringing awareness to our classroom at the very least. Change does not occur immediately, it takes time, a strategical process, it takes effort and determination. By acknowledging the issues and concerns that affect the Latinx student to the classroom is a first step to bringing awareness to others.

Acknowledging one’s culture in the classroom is also a form to move forward in higher education. Given that the educational system was created exclusively for White students, and that micro-aggressions follow our the Latinx even in educational platforms, a way to make our existence present is by incorporating or recognizing our culture. In Tara Yosso’s, Whose Culture has Capital?, the author states that community cultural wealth is an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression, (Yosso 77). Nuestra cultura is important to us, Latinx students because it helps us grow as a Latinx community. Maintaining our culture alive empowers us, students of color, to continue resisting to the social norms that have been imposed on us. With our culture present we are able to bring cultural knowledge to other non-Latinx students. Inclusivity and diversity is fundamental to the success of any student of color.

Creating community within faculty, staff, peers, and the Latinx student is a form of empowering the Latinx student in higher education. Using the resources, we have to continue to grow as students and as a community leads us to the path of success. A stronger sense of community leads to open-mindedness, inclusivity, mentorship, and acceptance. The Latinx student has strengths and knowledge rooted in their ancestry, community, family, and identity,
We are very family oriented, therefore, a strong community is necessary for us to feel more at home, to feel like we actually belong, and to essentially acquire that anticipated degree.

Students with an ethnic consciousness are driven by the motion that their success is not just for themselves; it is also to lift the Latinx community, (COHED 23). Now that I am in higher education my purpose in life is more than just receiving another college degree. Giving back to my community is important and a reason why I decided to continue expanding my knowledge by entering the world of academia. My ultimate goal is to professionally assist, inspire, and encourage and expose students of color to the world of higher education. As a high school counselor I want to target minority students, the ones who have been marginalized all throughout their educational years-- yet they don’t notice it, and assist them with enrolling in four-year institutions. Not only do I want to expose students to higher education but I also want them to take pride and feel closer to their roots and culture-- a culture that has been neglected by the ideal American educational system. I want to expose students to the advantages and “disadvantages” we encounter in higher education. Exposing the underprivileged with my knowledge and being a leader in my community is my form of widening up the path for those who follow me.

Latinx students in higher education show resistance and revolution. We are one of the largest growing minorities in the United States and focusing on higher education we note that it is becoming more accessible to us. Although it is accessible to us, this does not mean we are provided with the fundamental resources to succeed in academia. Yes, there are educational inequities that we face simply for identifying as Latinx. Yes, we are marginalized in the classroom but regardless of the marginalization we encounter on the daily I still believe there is a way forward for us. The negative connotations such as racial micro-aggressions, and lack of
representation are insufficient reasons for us to leave our educational aspirations. The
Americanized educational system is known for oppressing us, and we, the Latinx community are
known for resisting and fighting the oppressive conditions we are exposed to. Three ways to
move forward are by creating dialogue, creating a sense of community, incorporating our culture
in the classroom, and being a leader to our community. We are no longer willing to be oblivious
to an educational system that marginalizes us. We are hungry for success. We are empowered by
our Chicanidad. We are here to stay.
Work Cited


Annotated Bibliography


The purpose of this Re-Enactment is to have a clear and concise understanding of the Mendez v. Westminster case that occurred in the 1950s. The online court study provides general information on the case, trial evidence, the United States’ court decision, the appeals of the decision, and the life of Sylvia Mendez, one of the students that was denied school access because of her race and ethnicity in Westminster.


Alejandro Covarrubias conducts a case study of the Chicanx educational pipeline. In his research he focuses on how race, class, gender, and citizenship status play an important role in the educational trajectory of the Mexican-American student. Covarrubias goes on researching and providing evidence on how the Chicanx student has been marginalized all through their educational journey. Labeling and micro-aggressions continue to be present in the educational journey of the Chicano. Covarrubias works on bringing awareness through his research on ways that the Chicanx student is reprimanded.

In his dissertation, Eric Felix focuses on Latinos and the educational experience they encompass with racial microaggressions. Latinos being one of the fastest growing minorities in the United States face major challenges once in the higher educational system. Felix continues by explaining how the racial and negative perceptions of Latinx students have a great effect in their educational aspirations. In most cases, racial discrimination leads the student to drop out of feel at a great disconnect with the university environment. Students of color are more likely to experience disconnection and isolation due to the racial micro-aggressions in the classroom. Researching the experience of the Latinx student in higher education is a form of moving forward in an educational system that was not created for the Latinx to succeed.

Menchaca and Valencia, “Anglo-Saxon Ideologies in the 1920s-1930s: Their Impact on the Segregation of Mexican Students in California”

A study focused in the early 20th century, Menchaca and Valencia research the current (then) school segregation that Mexican-Americans faced in elementary and secondary schools in California. Both authors make a connection of the school segregation faced by Chicano students to the Americanized ideal of education. The ideal Anglo-Saxon educational ideologies encouraged Anglo citizens to impose a sense of superiority along with excluding the Chicanx student from the school system. This research case study focuses on school segregation, Chicanos and racism in the classroom.

The authors in this case study focus on students of color in academia and the disadvantages they face while being in the system. Students of color often feel pressures, stresses, and a sense of not belonging in the classroom. Pifer and Baker work on exploring identity-based otherness and its related outcomes for students of color in the academy. Identity is important and serves as a tool to succeed through academia. This case study is experienced-based on outcomes on having a sense of acceptance in the classroom and the negative outcomes students of color face when the fundamental resources are not provided in order to succeed in academia.


Ventajas y Conocimientos is another case study that analysis the Chicanx student in higher education. The authors of this case study focus on the disadvantages students face for being first generation students, culture shock in an academic environment, and the lack of Latinx representation in the classroom. Through an experience-based study, COEHD centralized on what Chicanx are doing to push through an educational system that was not meant for them. Creating community is important to the Chicanx study because it empowers them to continue with their education.

San Miguel and Valencia, “From the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to Hopwood: The Educational Plight and Struggle of Mexican Americans in the Southwest.”

San Miguel and Valencia focus on the early beginnings of school segregation for the Mexican-American student. After the Mexican-American war, Mexican students faced discriminatory remarks in the classroom and a great sense of segregation because they
were not up to the standards of the now “American” school system. Anglo citizens felt threatened by the Mexican student that they implemented strict rules brushing off the Mexicano’s language, culture, and traditions in the classroom. From an analytical perspective, the Mexican-American war is grounding point in understanding the way the educational system has been set up for the Chicanx student to fail in the classroom.


Chapter 6 of Hispanics and the Future of America focuses on the barriers that Latinos face in higher education. The section that I specifically focused on was first-generation students and the high expectations their parents imposed on them with education. Having high expectations is sometimes not enough for the Latinx student to succeed. The Latinx student needs resources and academic support to be able to excel with their academics.


This book focuses on the Mendez family suing the Westminster School District for denying access to education to their children. Race and ethnicity was a detrimental factor for a school campus to deny the student. The students were sent off to Mexican schools, which were more underserved than the American schools. This case is a form of fighting against the oppressive system that the Latinx student has lived under. It was also a grounding point in awakening and protesting against racial discrimination in the classroom.
This article focuses on the importance of community for the Latinx student or any student of color that is currently living under a non-inclusive campus environment. A form of dismantling the negative perceptions imposed on the Latinx student is by grasping on to the few resources provided to them and uniting as a community to make their voices heard. This research approaches education for the Latinx student as a commitment to develop schools that acknowledge the multiple strengths of communities of color in order to serve a larger purpose of struggle toward social and racial justice.
Synthesis Essay

My capstone project summarizes my HCOM experience as a whole. I decided to focus on Chicanos in higher education because it resembles to my identity as a Mexican-American woman in higher education and the burdens I have encountered once in the system. Even before selecting Dr. Wang’s class theme on Border Crossings and Cultural Negotiations, I had set my mind to researching on something that resembled to my experience as a Mexican-American. Growing up I struggled with finding a home in the educational system. I never really knew what to identify as. One day I would consider myself fully American, and deny my roots. Other days, I would strictly embrace my Mexican roots and culture. It was a constant battle with not knowing what category I pertained too. It wasn’t until I came to CSUMB that I noticed the inclusivity and diversity the campus offered. I began to become more and more aware of my identity. I learned for the first time what it meant to be a Chicanx, and that there were others in the same situation as I. I can now say I identify as Mexican-American, or Chicana woman in higher education.

I think that my research project on Chicanos in higher ed ties down to the class theme of Border Crossings and Cultural Negotiations because of the identity that we sometimes fail to embrace in the educational system. With this research project I wanted to grasp a full understanding of reasons why we sometimes deny our roots, and even if we don’t why we are not making it into the Americanized educational system. I also centralized my topic on different ways that the Chicanx student is revolutionizing and fighting against the educational oppressive system while at the same time claiming that identity and representation that has long been taken away from us. My paper purposely serves as a representation of HCOM as a whole because it discusses issues of educational equity, race, ethnicity, and social justice.
My experience this semester of researching and planning out this capstone project was challenging because of the amount of research I did to get a moderate understanding of how the educational system has been shaped to push the Chicanx student out. I was able to relate to many of the case studies implemented on my research paper; such as being a first-generation Mexican-American student, feeling disconnected and isolated from the campus environment, and lacking representation in the classroom. Overall, I think that education is important to the Chicanx student because that is what we have been taught throughout the years. In order to succeed in the country of opportunities we must receive an education. It is important to continue dismantling stereotypes and negative perceptions imposed on the Chicanx student, and any other minority. My form of moving forward in education was by writing this paper and exposing others to a more understanding and comprehensive sense of the Chicanx in higher education.