Multicultural voices: a study of Puerto Rican first generation students' perceptions of their guidance counseling services and their opportunity to achieve a post-secondary education.

Sonia Correa Pope
University of Massachusetts Amherst

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MULTICULTURAL VOICES: A STUDY OF PUERTO RICAN FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR GUIDANCE COUNSELING SERVICES AND THEIR OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE A POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

A Dissertation Presented

by

SONIA CORREA POPE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1998

School of Education
MULTICULTURAL VOICES: A STUDY OF PUERTO RICAN FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR GUIDANCE COUNSELING SERVICES AND THEIR OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE A POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

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by

SONIA CORREA POPE

Approved as to style and content by:

Robert Colbert, Chair

Ernest Washington, Member

Henry Geddes, Member

Bailey Jackson, Dean
School of Education
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the love that I always received from my LORD. Thank you JESUS, without you this would be just a dream. Please keep blessing me through the days! I will always receive you as my SAVIOR.

A mis padres VINA Y JOSE

A Papi, por que siempre me dijo: “a la hija de José nada la tumba [detiene], ella tiene fuerza así como su Papá…”
Gracias, Papito.
A Mami, por todo el amor, la confianza y sobre todo, por la calidad de espíritu religioso que siempre me dió, estas fueron las herramientas que siempre utilicé para alcanzar mis triunfos.
Gracias, Mamita.

A mi hermano JUNIOR así como a JEANETTE, KATHLEEN Y KRISTHEEN
Por todo el apoyo y el amor recibido. Mi hermano, es uno de los tesoros más grande en mi corazón.

A mi hijo JAYLEN,
Por que su nacimiento trajo el amor puro a mi vida, la confianza y la lealtad ¡Gracias Baby Love!

To my husband, WILLIE
Thank you for your patience, your companion and for the ability of understanding the moods while balancing my time, as well as for the support given through the difficult times.

Thank you All! ¡Gracias a Todos!
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I knew that one day I was going to write this page, but I did not know how many obstacles I needed to overcome in order to write this page. To give up was not one of my options, however only God knows how many times I cried in silence, because I felt so overwhelmed. During these periods I always used the tool passed down by my mother: prayer, and I was able to get up one more time and continue.

As a first-generation student I did not have the advantages that many other students had, but I knew I had self-determination, motivation and a huge desired to become a good role model for so many students.

Today, I am proud to return the trust that my parents put in my hands when I left home in 1983. Not only did I reach a higher level of education by obtaining this doctoral degree, I also gained the necessary tools to survive in life. I first, thank my Lord, because he is my life, second, myself, because of my self-determination, third, my parents and brother. My father who encouraged me to strive for the best, not to give up, even if the situation was difficult, “just rest, and continue the path... you will get there one way or the other...” My mom, because she gave me the most important tools when I left my home, “los escapularios, el rosario y las oraciones.” Those special tools allowed me to continue when I thought that I could not continue the
journey. To my brother who I admire and adore because of his true love. I will always remember his loving overprotection. Fourth, to my son and my husband who became part of my life through this process. Jaylen’s birth brought inspiration to my life and I thank my husband for it. Jaylen brought a series of experiences, which made me a stronger women. I thank Willie for his patience and his love. For being my friend and for supporting me through difficult times. Your sense of humor and your positive perception about life helped me to relax after a stressful day. I will always remember the many times you stayed up waiting for me to turn off the computer.

I also have so many friends and relatives who have made a difference in my life: My dear cousins: Junior and Lissette, I always felt that I needed to be their role model. To my true friends: Carmencita, Nana, and Lina because they became the sisters that I never had. Their love and support helped me through so many difficult times, there was always a hand, a smile, a hug, and I thank them for all those tears “que juntas derramamos”, ¡cuánto las quiero! To my very special support group: My mother in law, Terry; my sister in law-lashia, because they made me part of their family and always had a supportive comment and a prayer for me. To the love and caring that Norma and Madjid have for my son Jaylen. For the peace that I feel when I need to leave Jaylen with them, Gracias de corazón. To Ana, because you
lent me a generous hand when I needed it the most: Dios te guarde! To Nelson, for calling me “Doctora” even when I was struggling with the process. Your encouragement guided me through the final steps.

Two special people also made a difference in my life: Goggie and Cuco. There is no words that can describe the gratitude that I have for all that you did for me. You guided my first steps, you fed me, you made me part of your home when I was physically ill or just when I needed support, you loved me as a daughter and today I ask the Lord, to keep you and your family safe. Muchas gracias por ayudarme!

To my co-workers: Evelyn, you are a very special young woman, thank you for your proof reading, typing and for your daily remarkable words, you make me feel that I am making a difference in your academic life. Larry, “my baby”, to a very special Puerto Rican first-generation student who I have had the honor to help for the past seven years. Thank you for being one of my special students, because you symbolize the encouragement of getting up every single day and coming to work with a smile on my face. Your academic achievements make me very proud and uphold my desire to improve my every day work with first-generation students. Angel, there are no words to express my gratitude for all the technical and computer support I received from you. Your talents make me
very proud and I know that you will go very far. Keep up the good work, and remember never let anyone stop you, look inside and use the right tools to continue I will be there for you if you need me. Gracias por tu ayuda y tu estima. Paulette, you became my sister! Your trust and generous “huge favor” helped me to reach this dream. I will never forget your support, thank you so much for being a sister. To my big sister Chris O’Hare, for all these six years of friendship, for being my mentor and my role model. You are very special in my professional life. Thank you for listening, advising and for a special friendship. To Joe “T”, sometimes things are not quite available to some people, but you were always there for me when I needed technical support. Thank you for your assistance! To Tom Greene, my dissertation editor, thank you so much for your time and motivation.

Finally, to all my first-generation students from Holyoke and Chicopee, to my doctoral committee, Dr. Robert Colbert who believed in me, understood my interest in first-generation students and who guided me through this difficult process. Dr. Ernest Washington, who always had the time to share his impressions in regards to the topic, and Dr. Henry Geddes, who always received me with a smile making me feel that I was on track, I knew what I was doing. Thank You so much!
ABSTRACT

MULTICULTURAL VOICES: A STUDY OF PUERTO RICAN FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR GUIDANCE COUNSELING SERVICES AND THEIR OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE A POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

MAY 1998

SONIA CORREA POPE, B.A. UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO
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The fields of multicultural counseling and education have given increased emphasis to the relationship between minority students and academic performance in our classrooms. The literature on minority students’ achievement has shown that public education in this country experiences criticism and controversy and fails to meet the educational expectations and demands of minority students, particularly those of Hispanic heritage. In addition, Hispanic students are affected by their high dropout rates and academic underachievement. In search for solutions and strategies, social scientists, educators and multicultural school counselors have identified minority students in our classroom as a vital part for teachers development.
This study explored Puerto Rican first generation students’ perceptions of their guidance counseling services and their opportunity to achieve a post-secondary education. The study explored how those perceptions enhance the educational and learning process. By using a phenomenological survey, data was gathered from 60 Puerto Rican first generation students. A triangulation strategy was used, as well as factor analysis and cluster methods for the data analysis, in search for patterns, categories and themes among participants’ responses.

There were four major findings in this study. It was found that these students want to be more aware of their guidance counseling services. It was found that the participants’ perceptions in regards to their parents assistance with their school matters were important to them. It was also found that their perceptions in regards to their teachers’ advising is a vital factor for their academic performance. Finally it was also found that these students believed that an academic after school program can benefit them with their academics and personal matters and furthermore it serves as an important liaison between students ⇔ teachers ⇔ counselors ⇔ principals and parents.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The number of first generation students is increasing significantly in our post-secondary institutions (Hsiao 1992), therefore, the fields of high school education and multicultural counseling are stressing an important message by recognizing the importance of sending first generation students to an educational post-secondary setting. The literature on first generation students has shown that the urgency to respond to the educational needs of Hispanic first generation students has received increasing attention at national educational levels in recent years (Rivera & Nieto 1993, Valdivieso & Nicolau, 1990).

The American educational system is failing to educate and work with minority students, particularly those of first generation Hispanic background. The price of losing our minority students has begun to impact our well-being as a multicultural nation. Unfortunately, the discrimination that students face in school is not a thing of the past (Ascher & Burnett 1993). The quality of education for Hispanic students
tends to be inferior to that for non-Hispanic students (Ortiz 1988). Minority students work with teachers who believe that due to students socio-economic background, culture and other socio factors they are incapable of succeeding in college (Wright 1987). Minority students are not even thinking about entering college (Nieto 1996). The proportion of Hispanics with low educational attainment has increased, for example Hispanic people showed less than a fifth grade educational level in 1993 compared to non-Hispanic Whites who graduated with bachelor’s degrees (Montgomery 1994). The academic achievement scores for Hispanics and Blacks remain lower than those of White students (National Council of la Raza, 1990).

Increasing the number of minority teachers entering teacher education is an important educational concern. The recruitment and retention of this group of teachers should be a priority for our American school system. A powerful message may be sent to students about the subordinate status of some teachers and staff when most of the positions of authority and influence in a school are held by European Americans (King, 1993; McElroy-Johnson, 1993). When students do not see
minorities as their teachers or administrators, they may assume incorrectly that minorities should not be in these positions.

Data revealed that a teaching force that includes only 8% of African American teachers, 3% of Latino teachers, 1.4 of Asian American/Pacific Islander teachers and .9% of Native Americans (NEA, 1991) caused the unbalanced situation continue to escalate (King, 1993). Minority students look to minority teachers as possible role models (Bass de Martinez, 1988; Baez & Clarke, 1990; Haberman, 1988; Hunter-Boykin, 1993). There is a type of shared identity and cultural compatibility between teachers and students, sometimes it is not consistent with what they live every day, what they know, and what is familiar to them (Alexander & Miller, 1989).

In our search for solutions to help multicultural first-generation students prepare for college entrance we need to accept the challenge. Multicultural counselors and other counseling professionals needs to see themselves as “agents of change”, and work towards the well-being of a first generation student in the school environment.

The idea of this study emanates from the awareness that there is a powerful connection between first-generation students’ success and
multicultural counselor/teachers’ expectations. This study intends to provide paths for a multicultural alliance for Puerto Rican first-generation students. Some Puerto Rican students perceive education as a valuable key to the future, but these students also have some difficulties setting long term goals because of the lack of expectations from counselors, teachers, sometimes their parents and sometimes from themselves.

In order for us to create paths for a multicultural intervention it is crucial that counselors, teachers and administrators give importance to cultural factors such as: (1) Hispanic culture is considered to be family and community oriented. Puerto Rican first generation students view themselves as representatives of their communities and family units first, and then as individuals second (Wright 1987). If this is the case, how do Puerto Rican first generation students deal with the conflict of separation? (2) We need to believe and accept that education is highly valued by the parents, regardless of their economic background or their educational background (Steinberg; Brown; Crider; Kaczmarek; Lazzaro, 1988). Parental involvement is currently a major factor for schools, teachers, multicultural counselors and administrators. If we have a strong component of parent involvement, then we will be working with making
the students more consistent in academics and also making them better achievers. This study will present the implications of how Puerto Rican first generation students deal with the conflicts when they are applying for college, and their perceptions in regards to their guidance counseling services. It also will report on the support received from their parents, educators and administrators.

Along the same line of thought, the study will look into how Puerto Rican first generation students perceive the first year of college? In the search for solutions to this matter, colleges and universities should have an early identification of students who might be “at risk”: perhaps during the admissions process provide these students with a required college orientation course. An "Academic Alert Program" perhaps, will be a great tool to support retention. Mentoring, and tutoring programs should also be available to all first generation students. The colleges and universities should also provide a range of programs and student services to counteract the weakness many of the first generation students bring with them to higher education.

Three other approaches that colleges and universities should follow are (1) to specialize outreach, create strong tutoring support groups, (2) to
bridge programs making possible the link between high school and post-secondary levels, (3) to offer college orientation classes reviewing practical skills, college procedure, and available support services.

As educators, counselors and administrators we need to acknowledge that good teaching happens when students are involved with issues they perceive as important concerns; when students are involved with getting explanations of differences in race, culture, religion, ethnicity, and gender; when students are helped to see major concepts, big ideas, and general principles that will allow them to interact in our society rather than isolated facts that might not have any meaning to their lives. Good teaching also happens when students are involved in applying their ideas to "real life" situations, and when they are involved in their education, actively involved in their school settings and when they are able to ask.

In summary, this study will examine first generation Puerto Rican students' perceptions of their ability to resolve conflict when planning a post-secondary education.
Purpose of the Study

First generation students represents an increasing group of students in our community colleges as well as in our universities (London 1989). These new students to higher education often face unique challenges in their search for a degree; for example: conflicting obligations, false expectations, lack of preparation or lack of support among others.

This study will explore Puerto Rican first generation students' perceptions in regards to their guidance counseling services as well as their parents support, and their community.

The questions for this study will reflect the perceptions of Puerto Rican first generation students in regards to their guidance counseling services, their parents support and their teachers advice as well as their perceptions in regards to their participation with an academic after school program. Questions that will lead me to my investigation are:

(1) What are Puerto Rican first-generation students’ perception in regards to their school counseling services?

(2) Do first-generation students believe that their schools’ guidance counseling services are meeting their needs and concerns in a satisfactory manner?
(3) What are first-generation students' perceptions about entering a post-secondary institution?

(4) To what extent do Puerto Rican first-generation students believe that their parents assist, support and understand the importance of their academics?

(5) What are the students' perception in regards to how teachers, counselors, and administrators view them as students striving for a post-secondary education?, and to what extent do Puerto Rican first-generation students believe that involvement in an after school program will make a positive improvement in their academics?

**Significance of the Study**

The researcher have spent the past seven years of graduate study concentrating on first generation and low income students from different ethnic backgrounds, specializing on Puerto Rico first generation students. In these years, she has worked closely with four public schools through extensive visitations, meetings and conferences with teachers, counselors,
administrators and parents. With each visitation, the researcher has contemplated much evidence of how the social, economic, and cultural changes in our student population and the lack of diversity present in our teaching, and counseling forces are adversely affecting the quality of education.

While the Puerto Rican first generation student population has increased, the teaching and counseling forces have remained mainly European American. This fact can be considered as a detrimental factor because it is understood that European American teachers and counselors have not had the same experiences nor do they come from the same background as the majority of students in the schools today. Without this "shared identity" (Zapata, 1988) it is more difficult for students to make home-school connections which scientists believe is vital to success in school (Jackson, 1986).

It is important that all students should have the opportunity to see obvious examples of diversity in the teaching and counseling forces. Teachers, counselors and school administrators should firmly recruit more minorities into teaching and counseling.
This study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on multicultural counseling interventions at the high school and college levels, and it will also contribute to the research regarding Puerto Rican first generation students. It will also give a framework upon the existing literature on how minority parents participate in the schools.

School personnel, particularly multicultural school guidance counselors concerned with the involvement of Puerto Rican first generation students at the high school level, will find practical multicultural ideas in this study. They will also find some of the culture bound factors operating for the Puerto Rican first generation students when interacting with school teachers, counselors and administrators.

This research is a descriptive and exploratory study. The study intends to offer new ideas and the opportunity to expand the interest in researching more about Puerto Rican first generation students in our schools. Teachers, administrators and counselors involved with multicultural education and counseling can be benefited from this research. Also, different hypotheses can be drawn for further research on this topic.
Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. The research presented was essentially a study of one group of Puerto Rican first generation students enrolled in public schools from Western Massachusetts.

Although the Puerto Rican first generation students surveyed for this study represent a fair amount of other first generation students in Western Massachusetts, we can not assume that the findings presented describe all first generation students from Western Massachusetts. These findings can not reflect the perceptions of other ethnic first generation students [groups].

It is fair to say that the results from this study can not be generalized to the entire Puerto Rican first generation population, but it is also fair to mention that this study can be useful to school teachers, counselors, and administrators, especially in a multicultural school environment.

The research methodology for this study also has several limitations. I will administer phenomenological surveys to Puerto Rican first generation students. The data gathered from these surveys can generate some variation in the depth and content of individual experiences.
The use of this research will be especially useful in presenting valuable information about an area of multicultural counseling where little research has been conducted.

Research's Bias

The personal experiences as a member of the Puerto Rican first generation community in this country and the working experiences with these students, teachers, counselors and administrators without a doubt, had an effect on the researcher perceptions regarding this study.

Because of the daily intervention with Puerto Rican first-generation students, the researcher have certain beliefs about these students’ limitations, however for the purpose of this study it will focus on the results. The study reduced the limitations by close examination of the researcher involvement, reactions, and interpretations, but also by cross examining the interpretations with the findings and the review of literature.
Definition of Terms

The terms chosen for this study, when referring to the current literature on this topic reflects operational definitions. These terms intend to be key concepts for this study. The researcher would like to ensure the readers with the necessary understanding. In choosing and defining these terms, however the researcher made an effort to be sensitive to the people in question. The researcher tried to use the most precise and affirmative labels.

In making the decisions the researcher was influenced by Nieto's (1992) comment that, because language is always changing: "we should determine what language is most useful, precise, and appropriate for each of us at any given point." (p.5).

Minority: The term minority in this study is used to describe Puerto Rican first-generation participants in general and any persons to whom they refer who are not members of the numerical European American majority in the United States.
**First Generation Student:** This study uses this term to refer to a student whose parents did not graduate from college. This means, that this student will be the first individual graduating from college in his/her nuclear family. This definition can also refer to students from a low-income family.

**College:** This term is defined as an institution or association of individuals having certain powers and duties engaged in some common pursuit, an institution of higher education that grants degrees, or any of the universities offering instruction and granting degrees in any several specialized course of studies. Finally, it is a long term perception for Puerto Rican first generation students. (Nieto, 1996).

**Low-Income Families:** This study uses the low-income term based on federal guidelines used in Western Massachusetts public high schools. The term describes families under certain income as presented in the following table on next page:
Table 1. Low-Income Families

<table>
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<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>15,915</td>
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<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>19,995</td>
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<td>07</td>
<td>36,315</td>
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<td>40,395</td>
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- For family units more than eight members, add 4,080 for each additional family member.
- The figures shown under family income represent amounts equal to 150% of the family income levels established by U.S. Bureau of the Census for determining poverty status. The poverty guidelines were published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the *Federal Register*, Volume 62, Number 46, March 10, 1997, pages 10856-10859.

**Hispanic:** The term Hispanic is a generic term used to refer to persons of Spanish heritage living in the United States. Although they may share a common language and some cultural values, they are a heterogeneous group divided by geography, country of origin, race, socio-economic status and education. In the national census of 1990 there were approximately 22.4 million Hispanic or nine percent of the nation’s nearly 250 million people (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993), making them the second-largest minority group in the United States.
Puerto Rican: This is a standard term used in this study to refer to a Puerto Rican first generation student. It refers to a person who was born in Puerto Rico, or whose parents were born in the Beautiful Star of the Caribbean. Puerto Ricans are the second-largest minority group in the United States (because they are under the Hispanic statistics).

“At-Risk”: This term is used to refer to a first-generation student who might confront limitations in order to achieve a post-secondary education.

Multicultural: This is a descriptive term that refers to an approach to education, counseling and parental involvement which promotes cultural pluralism and social equality by reforming the school interactions with and programs for Puerto Rican first-generation students, teachers, counselors, and school administrators. It is a process where reflections of diversity are taken into consideration (Sleeter & Grant, 1987).
Culture: A practical definition for this study is adapted from Nobles (1978): "Culture is a montage of specific ways of thinking, feeling and acting which is peculiar to the members of a particular group." (p.682).

Multicultural Counseling: This study defines this term as an attempt to bring together new paths for counseling practice with culturally diverse groups, especially Puerto Rican first generation students. Multicultural counseling is also used to create paths for culturally responsive counseling in a variety of settings. These paths should not be a "how to do manual", they are intended to create awareness and to pass knowledge.

Organization of the Dissertation

The proposal of this dissertation will consist of a first chapter providing an overview of the research topic, as well as the purpose and significance of the study. Limitations of the study, definition of terms and researcher's bias will also be provided.
A second chapter providing a review of the literature in order to understand the context of the study. Cross examining the findings with the literature will be presented in this chapter.

A third chapter presents the methods and procedures used in this study. The discussion of participants, the phenomenological surveys, results and collected data will be emphasized in this chapter.

A fourth chapter discussing the findings, presenting the participants, so that the reader can follow up with the cases, and an overview of the cultural demographics will be presented.

Finally, a fifth chapter with a depth discussion section will be provided. Implications of the study for future research and for practice will be emphasized and a summary including my recommendation will also be provided for teachers, counselors and school administrators.
Introduction

Deciding to go to college and choosing the institution to attend are two of the most important decisions for a Puerto Rican first generation student to make during his/her high school years. The quality of these decisions often depends on the quality of the information on which they are based. It is surprising that so little research has occurred in the area of investigating the influence of certain materials or advice from professionals on the students' decision to attend college. According to John Ogbu (1993) students with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds may encounter problems if they receive help from school professionals who are not aware of cultural issues and ethnic diversity. If cultural issues and ethnic diversity are not considered then educators, counselors and administrators are not being made aware of why a Puerto Rican student might not choose a four-year college as his/her first choice, or why they are not considering college at all, or what are their common reasons and
fears about college, and so many other obstacles that need to be overcome in order for them to consider attending college.

It is very important to recognize that the Puerto Ricans in spite of the historical perceptions have been United States citizens since 1917. The Hispanic population is growing rapidly in the United States. According to the National Council of La Raza's (1990) the Hispanic population in the United States will constitute one-sixth of the nation's students by the year 2000. If that is the case then it is also important to recognize that our teachers and counselors need to be prepared in order to receive these students in their classrooms. According to the NCLR (1990) it is also important to understand that among Hispanics between the ages of 18 and 24 only 55 percent have completed high school. This compares with a 75 percent completion rate for Blacks and an 82 percent rate for Caucasians. The figures also show that while 52.9 percent of the 18 to 19 year old Hispanics who graduated from high school enter college, only 14.7 percent obtain their bachelor's degree. While this marks an increase in the total number of degrees received between 1978 and 1987, the percentage of degrees awarded in 1987 to all Hispanic groups was only 2.7 percent. This compares with 84.9 percent of Caucasian students who
received the bachelor's degree. Why are Hispanics achieving fewer academic degrees? There are many factors to consider and many authors present different views.

Steven Zwerling (1992) suggested that the impact of teaching/counseling approaches can be helpful, but can also be "detrimental" if cultural differences are not taken into consideration. Educators cannot assume that all teaching methods or counseling approaches works the same for all students the same. The non-traditional students are in our classrooms and we have a responsibility to learn the necessary skills to work with them, and furthermore to develop sensitivity towards those students. Teachers should possess a working knowledge of cultural and ethnic diversity in order to determine whether their actions help or hinder their first generation students in general. It really does not matter if they come from a different or the same cultural background. First generation students according to this research refers to students with parents that could not attend college for whatever reason. Therefore, they are not thoroughly prepared to help their children. As a consequence, teachers and counselors should be able to offer this support.
All professionals might do well if they keep in mind the need for developing skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes that affect the teacher/counselor - student relationship and personal interaction. These skills can have a positive or negative impact on a student's future. A teacher/counselor also needs to understand and support his/her students' expectations and goals. If as educators we address the students' needs then we may be able to help and best serve our students.

The intention of this paper is to propose a series of innovative approaches concerning counselors working with Puerto Rican first generation students and families. The paper will provide you with the opportunity to review six of the most common factors affecting Puerto Rican first generation students when attempting to attend college. First, it is important to review the historical perspective of different sources designed to help first generation students, specifically financially. Socioeconomic factors affecting the first generation students is a crucial factor that hinders their possibilities of attending college. It is important to recognize that some sources have been assigned specifically for first generation students, but in reality they have not been used in an appropriate manner. Secondly, you will have the opportunity to acknowledge the
importance that the family and extended family plays in the decision of a first generation student when choosing to stay in school or to apply to college. Also the pressures from friends and the community in general will be mentioned. Thirdly, it will present how the school system view these students and how the students view the school system. Fourthly, it will show how social skills play an important role in relation with the interaction of students and established curriculums in the schools. These curriculums might not necessarily fit the first generation student basic needs. Fifthly, how much the community can hinder or help a first generation student trying to stay in school. Sixth, how much can individual, group and family therapy can help or hinder a first generation student. The importance of having more professionals equipped to work with differences and cultural understanding.

How do First-Generation and College Definitions Relate to Puerto Rican First-Generation Students?

College is an expectation for some Puerto Rican students, but due to low expectations on the part of some teachers and counselors, family issues, financial situations and other reasons, the expectation to attend college is not always taken into consideration by the Puerto Rican first-
generation student. After six years of observation and working with Puerto Rican first-generation and low-income students in an urban public high school in Western Massachusetts, I strongly believe that most of the Puerto Rican first generation students coming from low-income families, do not have a remote idea of attending college. In this regards Doris Wright (1987) said that minority students work with teachers who believe that due to students socio-economic background, culture and other socio factors they are incapable of succeeding in college. Wright also recognized that minority students are not being acknowledged for their efforts in the classroom, instead they receive minimum delayed gratification.

Sonia Nieto (1996) also supports the idea of minority students not even thinking about entering college and strongly recommends that "important consideration should be given to students of color and from low-income families because they have been effectively denied the opportunity to receive a high quality education or even dream of college." She also argues that poverty is certainly a disadvantage, but it is not an impossible obstacle to learning. Furthermore, Carol Ascher and Gary Burnett (1993) stated that unfortunately the discrimination that children
face in schools is not a thing of the past. They believe that school practices and policies continue to discriminate against some children "in very concrete ways." Another example is given by Flora Ortiz (1988), she found in her research that the quality of education for Hispanic students tends to be inferior to that for non-Hispanic students. For example: Instructional programs for Hispanic children tend to be remedial, the students had teachers that do not believe that Hispanic children are capable of academically demanding work, and teachers who tend to avoid interaction including eye contact and physical contact, with their Hispanic students more often than with other students.

Good (1981) and Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson (1987) believed that there is a remarkable relationship between professor [teacher] expectations and student achievement. They believe that professors [teachers] tend to hold differing expectations for students based on prior achievement, gender, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity. In addition Feldman and Paulsen (1994) argue that teaching has been described as interaction that induces learning. They stated that if the quality of classroom teaching is linked to the quality of interaction, it is important for instructors to understand and direct student-teacher
interactions in the classroom. They also believe that nonverbal communication is typically more powerful and significant than verbal interaction, professors need to identify and interpret classroom interactions as both verbal and nonverbal levels. Feldman also argues that much of the research on what he calls "teacher immediacy" has focused on nonverbal cues and seems to indicate that immediacy does increase teaching effectiveness. Andersen (1979) describes immediacy as eye contact, gestures, relaxed body position, directing body position toward students, smiling, vocal expressiveness, movement and proximity. Andersen also stated that immediacy positively influenced student affect toward teacher communication, course content, the course in general, and the course instructor. Immediacy was also positively related to student likelihood of engaging in similar communication and the likelihood of enrolling in another related course. More recently, Plax, Kearney, McCroskey and Richmond (1986) stated that students' perceptions of teachers' immediacy were positively related to students' affective learning. Now, if immediacy is perceive as a positive approach, why would it influence learning? Andersen (1985) argues that in most instances immediacy increases the stimulation of learning setting the stage of cognitive learning. Kelley and
Gorham (1988) provided support for this position when they found in their research a positive relationship between immediacy, as defined by eye contact and physical proximity, and short-term cognitive recall. Greatest recall occurred with eye contact and high physical proximity.

The Puerto Rican first generation student goes through this same perceptions. Therefore, the definition of college and what it involves might be difficult for the Puerto Rican first-generation student to thoroughly understand. The meaning will be based on their experience at the high school level. There are also many social and economic factors that affect the meaning and its attainment. According to John Ogbu (1978) and Matute Brandri (1986) multiple factors including motivation, conditions under which students enter school, and perceptions of opportunities affect educational attainment. These authors also suggested that minorities who are first generation students often do not perceive education or aspire to high levels of education. They perceive limitations and they often reduce their expectations. Xue Lang Rong (1993) supported Ogbu (1978) and Bandri's (1986) view. Rong stated that Hispanic first generation students show lower achievement and higher dropout rates than their non-minority counterparts. John Ogbu (1986)
describe an interesting view about the perceptions of minorities in the United States. He tries to give an explanation of minority students school failure and success by suggesting that it is necessary to look not only at a group's cultural background but also it is necessary to look at its situation in the whole society and the perceptions of opportunities for the minorities in that society. He classifies ethnic groups within U.S. society as either "Voluntary or involuntary immigrants" that refers to those who come of their own free will as compared with those who have conquered or colonized. The latter groups have been incorporated into society against their will: American Indians, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans, among others. Ogbu (1986) and Ray McDermott (1987) strongly believe that students from particular backgrounds experience a great inconsistency in academic performance, and such inconsistency often can be explained by the sociopolitical setting in which they find themselves. Puerto Rican first-generation students are not always racially different from the dominant group, but they have lower social and political status. Nieto (1996) also agree with this view she stated that it is not the students differences that make them marginal, but rather the value that has been placed on those differences by the dominant society.
Considering that many Puerto Rican students come from families who are first generation themselves, we need to understand the lack of knowledge about achieving a post-secondary education in these families. This becomes an issue for Puerto Rican students trying to attend college. Family values are very important and they transform to factors that will hinder or help the first-generation student trying to make a decision about college. Family values and cultural styles have a large influence on a first generation student's direction in life. The family is a natural group that over time has evolved patterns of interacting. These patterns make up the family structure which governs the functioning of family members, delineating their range of behavior and facilitating their interaction. Since all these patterns represent family involvement, the family component is a great factor that can help or hinder a Puerto Rican first generation student trying to attain a post-secondary education. In a "well functioning family" members take a variety of different roles: caretaker, dependent, provider, spokesperson, etc. Family members operate with different styles and at different levels of functioning. Often these patterns are balanced so that the functions of different family members often differs in resources such as health, skills, meaningful work, money and support systems.
The Puerto Rican first generation student often assume a caretaker role. They often need to take care of their siblings, provide help with chores, and speak for their younger family members. Also, sometimes they need to speak for their parents because of the language barrier. Perhaps their parents decided to move to this area of Western Massachusetts for socio-economic reasons, but they do not necessarily know or understand the primary language.

Another noteworthy factor is the family educational level. This factor can also affect language acquisition. The lack of educational experiences limits the parent’s exposure to their new environment. The language barrier affects the first generation students and their families in different settings. Language is definite connected to culture. Is the mode by which people exhibit their cultural values and how they view the world. Nieto (1996) argues that the language that the children bring to school inevitably affects how and what they learn. She supports the fact of schools asking parents to speak English to their children at home, punishing children for using their native language, or asking the parents not to teach another language until the student mastered the English. But
in reality the majority of the Puerto Rican first generation students - parents do not know how to talk English, so the petition is not always accepted by parents.

According to some interviewed parents from two high schools in Western Massachusetts it is very hard for them to understand certain terminology at school meetings when school personnel or administrators try to explain school matters. They also mentioned that it was the same feeling in employment settings where they felt intimidated. Furthermore, they expressed that they felt uncomfortable when seeking health care at the hospitals or when they need to receive medical care. Translations have been provided for this population, but many times there is a lot missing from the translation or the translation is not accurate or complete. According to the Bilingual Research Office, Washington D.C. (1987) Spanish is treated by many teachers as a problem. This research also argues that there is evidence that teachers interact more negatively with students who do not speak English than with those who do. Nieto (1996) presents language barriers as "language diversity need." She believed that language should be place within a sociopolitical context, so that others can understand that speaking Spanish for example is not itself a limitation or a
disadvantage. In this same regards, Waggoner (1993) reported that the number of bilingual-minority students in the United States was estimated at 9.9 million and the number classified as having limited English proficiency also had grown dramatically. She stated that in 1991-92 academic year, there were 2½ million such students, an unprecedented increase of 1 million or over 51 percent, in the five years since 1986. She also mentioned that it will be even more dramatic because the expectation for year 2020 with limited English proficiency will be approximately 6 million students. This expectation can be supported by the United States Department of Commerce News (1993) because they reported that the total number of people speaking a language other than English increased from 23 million (11 percent) in 1980 to almost 32 million (14 percent) in 1990. These changes will definite bring new implications for education.

If language is increasing dramatically there is another cue for teachers and counselors. It will be important to recognize what are the implications of working with a school community who has a different language.

If we consider this information then we can state that it is evident that some school counselors and principals feel frustrated because the Puerto Rican or Hispanic parents do not attend any of the school meetings
or participate in the parents' council. According to some of the interviewed Puerto Rican parents from two high schools in Western Massachusetts the reason for them not attending school meetings is that they or their children feel embarrassed. They do not want to be translated, and very often they do not understand what the translator is saying because of sophisticated terminology that they do not understand due to their educational background (some of the parents only finished elementary education while others finished high school).

If language is a factor to consider when we work with Puerto Rican first generation students we also need to recognize and take into consideration the Puerto Rican family structure. Moll (1988 & 1992) suggests that students for whom English is a second language have many unacknowledged resources available to them outside of school, and that these resources, which he calls "funds of knowledge" can be used to enhance instruction. Moll (1992) found in his study that the Hispanic families had impressive knowledge and skills from fields as diverse as agriculture, to medicine. These skills can contribute to the intellectual and academic development of their children. Moll reports that the difference is that rather than focus on exact methods, practice, and memorization
with an emphasis on low-level literacy and computer skills they work on hands-on and that is their way of transmitting knowledge. In this same regards Solsken, Keenan, Willett (1993) supports that parents and other family members of children from widely diverse backgrounds can enhance their children's learning. The argue that parents should be given the opportunity to at least present projects in which parents are invited to speak about their culture and to share food or teach youngsters particular cultural crafts, movies, slides, textbooks and other. They believe that this action can enhance students skills and can influence student learning.

According to Nieto (1996) the European American middle class parents, given their own experiences and exposure to the schools, are much more aware of those activities that lead to academic success than are poor and working class parents from linguistic and cultural backgrounds different from the mainstream.

Steinberg, Brown, Crider, Kaczmarek, and Lazzaro (1988) presents a way of parents demonstrating their support for children academic success: this is through high expectations. These authors believe that education is highly valued by the parents, regardless of their economic
background or of their educational background. In fact, they believe that in some instances, working class and poor parents have more hopes in education than middle class parents.

The ways that a Puerto Rican first generation students' family support and sustain their children in their academic success may be complex and sometimes not what educators and counselors might expect.

Durán (1992) found that a particular disadvantage in the students early school years was their parents' inability to reinforce school concepts with homework, assistance or shared reading activities in English. Durán (1992) stated that the parents' inability to speak or read English should not be seen as a liability in itself, but it also can become an inability if the school does not provide alternative means for student learning through such structures as bilingual programs and homework centers.

Children from a Puerto Rican first generation family assume a family role of mature and responsible adult, particularly those who has to represents their parents in hospitals, courts, schools, and sometimes in employment settings. These students have been forced to grow up quickly, so may mean that they have missed some of the pleasures of childhood, but on the other hand they have learned to rely on their skills
and intelligence at an early age. This role has probably contributed to the academic success of some of them, but it could also contributed to their failure in academics, because it also means that they are frequently absent from school in order to assist with important family matters.

Educators and counselors need to have awareness of all these responsibilities in order to understand the Hispanic students' ties to their family and community. Wright (1987) supports that traditionally the Hispanic culture is consider to be family and community oriented. She argues that students who come from this type of environment may view themselves as representatives of their communities and family units first, and then as individual second. Individualism in traditional Hispanic familial units is not stressed to the degree that it is in the Anglo-Culture. Grossman's (1984) study indicated that ninety (90%) of surveyed Hispanic students agreed that they had a strong identification and loyalty to their family and community. The Hispanic as well as specifically the Puerto Rican first generation students are brought up to believe that contributing to and sacrificing for the benefit of the family group is more important than any personal gratification. As a result, Hispanic students always seemed to feel highly motivated to do things that have significance for their
families, friends, and community. Grossman (1984) also supports this view by stating that Hispanic students are always willing to put aside their personal goals and advancement in order to ensure the basic survival of the family.

Parental involvement is currently a major factor for schools, teachers, counselor and administrators. The need of having more parents involve in their children education is quite clear. Henderson (1989) believes that programs with a strong component of parent involvement, makes the students more consistent in academics and also makes them better achievers than in otherwise identical programs with less parental involvement. Stevenson and Baker (1987) describes parent involvement through activities such as attendance at parent-teacher conferences, participation in parent-teacher association (PTAs), and influence over their child's selection of courses predict student achievement, but such parent involvement is becoming more and more uncommon. Furthermore, Epstein and Dauber (1989) sustained that parents from linguistic and cultural diverse communities and from working-class neighborhoods frequently have a hard time with other forms of parent involvement expected by the school, such as homework assistance and family excursions. Usually
these families are trying to work in order to be "good citizens" and can not attend the activities. These authors also believe that when the parents do not attend the expected activities teachers generally feel and assume that these parents are not involved with the school and that they did not want to be. Gibson (1987) and Gibson and Ogbu(1991) argues that fact that economically oppressed parents may be primarily concerned with daily survival and may be unaware of how to give their children concrete support in areas such as homework should also be taken into consideration. They also reported their study finding where some parents never even visited the schools, but still the lack of school involvement did not mean that parents were uninvolved in their children's education.

Community involvement is also need, because students in schools that maintain frequent contact with their community outperform students in other schools. At the level of community and peer groups, first generation students are influenced by the family's social class. Key factors such as: How much does it cost? , Can I afford it? , How can I apply for financial aid? -these are among the most important questions parents and first generation students ask when they are selecting a two-year college or a four-year university. Parents are usually confused by the many different
aspects of dealing with the total cost of college, the cost for one semester, and how and when costs are paid and the options for paying school bills. In addition, students have been told in their communities as well as in their own school environments that they are not "college material" meaning that they are incapable of functioning at a higher level of education. Also, they have been told that their lack of academic skills limits them for college acceptance. If we take this negative reinforcement into consideration we can say that it is evident that the schools and the community have a great impact on the student. It can develop negative feelings and fears which makes it difficult for the first generation student deciding to obtain a post secondary education. Some of the influences involve: negative peer pressure, few strong role models and low-self esteem. These factors can hinder a Puerto Rican first generation student trying to make a decision for his/her future educational goal. Students dealing with this conflict usually do not know how to deal with their frustrations. They are not always motivated to ask for help or advice and often they do not receive the proper guidance.

If we take into consideration these crucial factors, it is necessary to increase research and to present more evidence on how schools,
communities, the socio-economic aspects, the educational level, and the family can hinder or enhance the chances of a first generation student to attain a post secondary education.

**Historical Perspective of Young Adults in Hispanic Families Where No One Has Had the Opportunity to Enter College**

In 1867 the Department of Education Act authorized the establishment of the United States Department of Education, (later on known as the Office of Education). In 1980, under Public Law 96.88 it became a cabinet level department. Nowadays, it is referred to as the "United States Department of Education" (1990).

The Federal Government's role of promoting equal educational opportunity through need-based student financial aid in higher education evolved from the "Great Society" programs of the 1960's. Beyond expanding general access, the Federal Government sought to remove financial barriers to further the education of low-income and disadvantaged minorities. Up to this moment, the federal government's
role has been defined in terms of meeting national needs rather than advancing individual citizens' rights to an equal opportunity for a quality education (1994 National Center for Education Statistics, Institutional Characteristics Survey, p.60).

The Federal Government has mandated state plans in a number of areas of federal support, including health education, vocational education, and compensatory education for the disadvantaged at the elementary and secondary levels. According to The Condition of Education Statistic (1994) Federal funding for education showed considerable growth between fiscal years 1965 and 1994 after adjustment for inflation. Particularly large increases occurred between 1965 and 1975. After a period of relative stability between 1975 and 1980, federal funding for education declined approximately nine (9%) percent between 1980 and 1985 after adjustment for inflation. From 1985 to 1994 Federal funding for education increased a great deal: approximately thirty-four (34%) percent. During the Fiscal Year 1994, $28.9 billion or about forty-two (42%) percent of the $68.4 billion dollars spent by the federal government on education came from the United States Department of Education. Large amounts of money also came from the United States Department of
Health and Human Services. Out of the $28.9 billion spent by the United States Department of Education in Fiscal Year 1994, about $11.6 billion went to school districts, $4.9 billion to institutions of Higher Education, $4.8 billion to college students, and $3.7 billion went to banks to subsidize student's loans.

Thirty-two (32%) percent of public elementary and secondary school students in the United States received publicly funded free or reduced price lunches in 1990-91. At public secondary schools, the participation rate was twenty-two (22%) percent. About thirteen (13%) percent of all elementary and secondary school children received Chapter I services in 1990-91. Federally sponsored Chapter I programs are designed to break the link between family poverty and low student achievement, particularly for children in schools with high concentrations of poverty. Children in rural areas and urban areas were more likely to receive assistance than those in suburban areas.

In 1950 the Financial Assistance for Local Educational Agencies was affected by Federal activities (Public Law 81-815) and the Public Law 81-874 provided assistance for construction (Public Law 815) and operation (Public Law 874) of schools in federally affected areas. In 1956
the Library Services Act (Public Law 84-011) provided grants to states for extensions and improvements for rural public library services. In 1958 the National Defense Education Act (Public Law 85-865) provided assistance to state and local school systems for strengthening instruction in science, mathematics, modern foreign languages, and other critical subjects. Improvement of state statistical services were shown on; guidance, counseling, and testing services and training institutes; higher education student loans and fellowships, foreign language study and training provided by colleges and universities; experimentation and dissemination of information on more effective utilization of television, motion pictures, and related media for educational purposes, and vocational education for technical occupations necessary to the national defense.

According to the United State Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1994 Survey (pp.30-31) between 1973 and 1992, the proportion of high school graduates going directly to college increased from forty-seven (47%) percent to Sixty-two (62%) percent. Also, the proportion of students choosing two-year colleges has increased. Therefore, high school graduates from low-income families (mostly all first generation students are also low-income students as well) were twice
as likely to go directly to college in 1992 than in 1973. Yet, only forty-one (41%) percent of high school graduates from low-income families went directly to college as compared to eighty-one (81%) percent of those from high income families. For example, in the past, most college students were white male adolescents and the sons of doctors, lawyers, ministers, prosperous merchants, and successful farmers. The smaller number of females who went to college were, with notable exceptions, enrolled in normal schools in order to become teachers or nurses and they were expected to leave the classroom if they married.

The world has become increasingly urban and bureaucratic. Advances in science and industry have changed the face of war and peace, and great migrations have mixed peoples and cultures as never before.

As a result of these and other changes, the contemporary student statistically speaking, is no longer upper middle class, adolescent, or male; instead the proportion of working class and minority students has increased dramatically, older students are now commonplace and women undergraduate are now in different fields of education.
Most first generation students are the beneficiaries of what sociologists call structural mobility. Typically, their grandparents did not finish high school and held blue collar jobs, their parents, who also may not have finished high school, now hold either blue collar or lower level white collar positions. As technological advances have made some jobs obsolete and created other more technically advanced positions, and as more occupations have sought to "professionalize" by keeping their recruits in school longer, students have increasingly needed to exceed the educational level of their forebears in order to maintain their relative socio-economic position. Due to the need for an advanced educational level a large number of these students are concentrated in community colleges. According to some literature first-generation students feel more comfortable and ease their transition from high school to higher education if they attend a community college first.
Economic/Financial Factors

For traditional Puerto Rican first generation students' family the definition of adult behavior, especially as it pertains to financial independence, and the age at which it is expected, plays an important role in the support and encouragement of education. For the majority of Puerto Rican families when an individual reaches the age of eighteen he/she is expected to support him/herself, especially the men, to a great extent. Maturity is also expected. The man should be mature enough to assume all responsibilities that an adult would have to assume and to help the family in any problem that they might encounter. The female at this stage still carries the nurturer and caretaker position. But she should also be mature enough to assume some other home responsibilities.

Although the researcher stated that overall the Puerto Rican first generation students do not have a clear idea of what college is all about there are some Puerto Rican first generation students who perceive higher
education as a means to a secure and well-paying career that will take
them away from the needy environment that they came from. According
to some interviewed students Criminal Justice, Business, Accounting,
Engineering and Education are the most frequently selected academic
programs. They strongly believe that these fields would help them with
some of the financial hardship that they encounter.

First generation students generally select from a set of college
options that are close to home, lower in cost, and that promote a number
of majors with direct occupational outcomes. Parents often encourage the
student to live at home on the premise that room and board are
unnecessary expenses. But, commuting to classes usually calls for the use
of a car, and the costs associated with transportation lead to part-time
employment.

According to the United States Department of Education, National
Center for Education statistics, Survey (1994) since 1980 College costs
have risen rapidly in both public and private institutions with tuition and
room and board increasing more at private colleges than at public colleges,
fifty-eight (58%) percent versus thirty-four (34%) percent.
A family's ability to afford college for its children depends on many factors, including tuition levels, availability of financial aid, family income and family size. Again, the financial key factor becomes an issue and the most common questions play an important role in choosing a college. How much does it cost? Can I afford it? How can I get financial aid? - these are among the most important questions a student considers when deciding to go to college and when selecting a college to attend. The area of costs and financial aid is frequently one of the most commonly confused and misunderstood areas. The parents are not familiar with financial aid, the words "Parental contribution" scares them away and the loans make them think that they will never qualify because they do not have financial credit. With college costs so high, the failure of students and parents to clearly understand those costs and the available aid can severely affect a family decision. In this same regards David Chapman (1980) stated that students frequently report that they did not know about the availability of financial assistance, about which application forms to use or how to complete them or about application deadlines. Indeed, those who are the most needy are often the least likely to have information about ways to meet college costs.
Family Factors

Margaret Brooks-Terry (1988) believed that parents reflect their own life experiences in the socialization of their children, modifying the subcultures as they perpetuate them. Parents' own exposure to college (if any) is a principal factor in their sons' and daughters' perception of college as an option, as well as in the selection of a college environment.

According to the United States Department of Education Post-Secondary student Aid Report (1994) the number of students majoring in the Arts and Sciences (Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Natural Sciences) increased as parents' education increased. It is also important to mention that many economic, social, and cultural factors influence students' decisions about their fields of major. Doris Wright (1987) believes that having information about the family educational background is relevant when a first generation student is choosing a major because this factor is associated with the student decision. If the parents had the opportunity to experience at least one year of college, their experience contributes to the students' decision. They try to explain to their children that they need to choose a career that would benefit them with both financial and employment factors.
Howard London (1992) stated that whatever the inspiration is for first generation students, going to college can be an eventful point of departure, a departure that moves the students into some "other culture."

When this occurs powerful social and personal dramas are played out. According to him this happens because students have to renegotiate relations with family members, friends, and, in a fundamental sense with themselves. These negotiations are not always accomplished easily or with a happy ending. Stierlin (1974) reports that the departure might help the students to realize or define who they are in the eyes of others as well as in their own, but it can also bring feelings of loss, conflict, pain, and disloyalty.

This is one of the reasons why first generation students are more likely to live at home and to work a part-time job at a location outside campus. The family and the work setting each represent a set of contradictory values, different from the values of the university or college chosen. Some parents and students see the family as the primary responsibility and college has to come second. If there is any family crisis the students are expected to abandon the classroom and immediately assist the family. Suzanne Steinmetz (1988) supported these statements by
saying that even when first generation students live on campus they tend to
go home on weekends or whenever there is any kind of family crisis. The
obligation to family and work make the first generation student a marginal
member of the campus from the day he/she enters classes. Steinmetz
mentioned that no matter what the community of residence does, once the
decision to attend college has been made, it is the parents' experience that
structures many of the options available to the student.

The daily reinforcement of the expectations of parents, the ties to
old friends in the community who are now earning regular paychecks, and
the values demanded by the part-time job all exert strong pulls on the
student to remain focused and well balanced in his/her actions. The
options in these social settings compete directly with the options
associated with higher education.

The family can limit or facilitate the student's receptiveness to the
idea of entering college in many ways. Some of these ways are presented
next.

1. Feasibility of Higher Education - Many parents who have not
had the opportunity to attend college themselves want their
children to benefit from higher education. They also fear the
cost, failure to find employment after graduation and general fears of failure.

2. Selection of the Institution - Some first generation students believe that they have chosen the college they enter; in fact, the selection was generally made from among a small set of alternatives approved by the parents.

3. Residence for Some Students - Living at home facilitates options because it makes college affordable.

4. Expectation of Course Work - The students are expected to pursue a challenging academic program, but the reality shows that many first generation students need to work while studying and this factor affects their expectations.

5. Completing Role Sets - The role that the majority of the Hispanic first generation students represent in their families is a major factor to be considered. If they are not close to the family and unavailable in a crisis situation they feel that they have a loyalty problem, so they tend to attend college close to home.
6. Knowledge of the Higher Education System - The majority of the first generation students' parents do not understand the school system or different financial arrangements that can be considered as financial aid: scholarships, parents' loans, grants, and others.

School System

According to Richardson (1992), helping first generation minority students to achieve degrees may require nontraditional strategies at all levels (Elementary, Middle, High School, College and University).

In a study about students attending community colleges Richardson (1992) concluded that more than fifty-two (52%) percent of the students interviewed were attending a community college. The majority of the graduates, fifty-eight (58%) percent, indicated they were the first in their families to attain a college degree. First generation college graduates were significantly more likely to have attended a community college, sixty (60%) percent in comparison with those who reported that one or both parents had graduated from college, forty-two (42%) percent, but clearly community colleges played an important role in helping both groups obtain their four-year education. He strongly believed that the community
colleges provide a more non-traditional educational environment and this factor helps the first generation student gain more confidence and keep a high level of motivation towards their third and fourth year of college.

Kronic and Hargis (1990) stated: "We believe that most dropouts should be viewed as curriculum casualties rather than personal circumstances, family matters, or financial problems." To certain point this is a broad factor, but according to this paper it should only be view as one of the factors or reasons for first-generation students to drop out of school. For example some students can drop out because of personal and financial problems, and according to Lee (1987) and London (1989) some students have the need to drop out from school or from college because of financial problems. They strongly believe that financial hardship is usually the primary reasons for their problems in school. In the other hand, Rong (1992) also stated that some of these students who drop out from school have had their achievement progress marked by poor attendance. A typical example of this statement might be that they might have dealt with health problems that interfered with regular attendance at school, which should be considered as a medical absence. This can also occur because
the student did not present a medical note, or because their parents did not
know how to ask the doctor for a medical note for school purposes.

Absenteeism is the cause of learning difficulties. Many students
may not obtain the required school hours and in turn they may fail. As
educators and counselors we need to recognize that one of the reasons
why students are not attending school is because they may find themselves
confronted with new and different curricula that they are not prepared to
deal with.

Richardson (1992) stated that the typical school curriculum
"isolates" students. He said that the students are usually placed in
isolated, competitive relationships by lock-step order and the grading
practices. Along with Richardson thoughts Sleeter and Grant (1991)
found after their study on school curriculums that although textbooks now
include more people of color and women, they continue to legitimate the
status of White males. He stated that the culture and adaptation of other
groups continue to be seen as a problem, European American culture is
not, it is seen as the dominant force in history. In this same regards, Apple
(1992) agreed by stating that although items relating to the experiences of
"subordinated groups" may be mentioned in textbooks, they rarely
developed in depth and they always show or describe the dominance of same powerful "white" group. Nieto (1996) also supports that a similar situation has been found in most children's literature, which until recently has omitted or stereotyped the lives and experiences of African American, American Indian, Asians, Mexican American, and Puerto Ricans. She mentioned that even when new and more inclusive literature is available, it is unclear whether schools includes it in their reading and library offerings. These findings strongly support the views of this paper because for example: the researcher strongly believes that many chapters are missing from the United States History class at our American classrooms. The United States History class for example do not include that Puerto Ricans have United States citizens since 1917, and so many students still, ask the Puerto Rican students about what "kind of currency" is used in Puerto Rico, or what kind of "green card" do they use. Melinda Fine (1993) supports this argument because she describes this issue as the "Facing History and Ourselves" (FHAO) curriculum. This is a model for teaching history that encourages students to reflect critically on a variety of contemporary social, moral, and political issues. Grant (1986) also supported that inappropriateness of school curriculums demonstrates that
it alienates many students. He found in his research that a third part of the students in a desegregated junior high school he studied said that none of the class content related to their lives outside class. Those who indicated some relevance cited only current events, oral history, money and banking, and multicultural content because it dealt with prejudice as being relevant. A similar view was provided by Poplin and Weeres (1992) they reported that four highly diverse public schools in California demonstrated in their research that students frequently reported being bored in school and saw little relevance of what was taught in their lives and for their future. The authors also reported that the students became more disengaged as the curriculum became more standardized. All these views conduce to some social skills developed or forced in our school curriculums. The session below gives a view of the social skills perceptions.

Social Skills

Social skill development is a very important curricular item, but it is not present in the majority of our school system, or perhaps it is not presented with the intention of covering all students needs. The isolating, competitive, lock-step curricula fail in regard to learning and possibly even
worse: they foster the development of asocial behaviors in students who cannot compete well within them. When the students do not feel integrated in the school curricula they feel that they do not belong in that environment and therefore back off from participating or getting involved. Fine (1991) called this isolation as "silencing". She believes that an issue that helps to maintain the separation between students' school and home lives is the schools' resistance to bring up difficult or conflicting issues. By taken this action the teacher or counselor is determining "who can speak, what can and cannot be spoken, and whose discourse must be controlled" (Fine 1991). Fine also mentioned that one topic that seems to hold particular importance for many young people, regardless of background, is that of biases and discrimination. Nevertheless, it is constantly avoided in most classrooms. Fine believed that this may be due to several factors including but not limiting to teachers who are unaccustomed, afraid, or uncomfortable discussing this issues. Teachers also might feel pressure to cover the material expected by their Chair Department or by the School Principal, and obviously this issues are not included in the traditional curriculum.
In the six years of direct participation and intervention with students in some public schools in the Western Massachusetts area many instances were witnessed, where the attitude of some teachers towards their Puerto Rican first generation student is affected by how the student does with the curriculum and the grading system. They fail to look at and understand the student's background. The teachers fail to recognize and do not understand that the current educational system is not designed to accommodate the diverse culture or these students' needs. Also, the schools seemed to be willing to overlook the problems of most students that do not cause disruptions and difficulties while in school and they also fail to deal with "discipline problems." Many observational experiences supported my strong feelings in regards to the students' school suspension from classes for three consecutive days, this should not be an option for disciplinary issues at school. Strategies such as retaining those students who did not obey the rules and regulations or because of disciplinary actions in a classroom -- in an after-school program working on their homework, researching a topic, helping cleaning up the school, or attending special workshops should be alternatives instead of suspending them for three days. The three-day suspension just deprives the students
of their rights to exacerbates the absence problems, and delays students from presenting school work on time, because some teacher would not accept an overdue assignment due to suspension "punishment."

Wehlage and Rutter (1986) sustained that disciplinary policies often discriminate against particular students, especially when they receive imposed regulations rather than regulations that have been negotiated. Students usually perceive this regulations as unfair and ineffective. Wehlage and Rutter call this action "holding power" of school, but only for some students. Felice (1981) also supports that dropouts are more likely on students who have attended schools with disproportionately high rates of suspensions and expulsions. Bryk and Thum (1989) strongly supports that the connection between the school environment and the dropout rates has been found to be quite strong, but he also believe that it can be worked out if we contribute in three areas: (1) a dedicated environment; (2) a committed and caring faculty; and (3) an emphasis on academic pursuits.

The students who do not fit the school or community standards are left out, for the most part, and the teacher's and/or counselor's usual interaction with them will be for the purpose of dealing with disruptive and
unacceptable behavior or for academic issues. Often the tremendous caseload per counselor does not allow a close interaction with students regarding issues affecting their academic progress. Based on that fact, these students will not feel valued: therefore, they may feel that there is no reason to show respect and obedience where there will be no reciprocation.

Some of the Puerto Rican students stated that they do not believe that they are heard when there is a disciplinary problem. Sometimes they are judged without having the opportunity to explain their side of the story. Because of these feelings some of these students usually do not feel that they have been respected. They feel devalued and they do not feel part of the school. They reported that when they have the opportunity they try to make connection with some outside educational programs in order to receive some support and perceive education as their way to a better future.

Community

The teachers and counselors should be aware of the legal and social structure of the community where students live in order to make good
decisions concerning their students' future. Some of the Puerto Rican first generation students in Western Massachusetts are really trying to live and survive every second of their lives. In order for the professionals to help with this issue they should work on the social studies curriculum. Social studies at the high school level should be designed to help the students learn to live peacefully and "helpfully" in society. Learning to be an acceptable citizen may be an extra long-term effort for some of the Puerto Rican first generation students because of all the negative images that the community has developed already.

Cultural awareness is needed in our schools. Spindler (1990) describes culture as a process, a verb more than a noun, an "organized activity," engagement in obtaining possessions, recognition, power, and satisfaction. Culture is also what happens when people try to make sense of their lives and the lives of those around them. Spindler (1990) also said that cultural transmission requires cultural learning. This learning process is an essential feature not only for schools, but for all the institutions including business, family, church interventions, and the whole society. Finally Spindler (1990) reported that cultural understanding makes communication possible. Based on these definitions we need to
understand that cultural issues at the schools, colleges or universities involve tensions not only between middle class and poor first-generation students, but also with any other student of the same race as well as between students of different races. First-generation students also confront issues of race. They not only need to prove that they can perform at the expected level but they also confront issues of classism between themselves.

Nieto (1996) states that many teachers and schools, in an attempt to be color-blind, do not want to acknowledge cultural or racial differences. For example: a teacher can say: "I don't see Black or White, I only see students in my classroom", still according to Nieto (1996) this statement will be used to be fair, impartial and objective because to see differences, in this words of reasoning, is to see defects and inferiority. Although these words sound fair to many educators and counselors it may result in refusing to accept differences and therefore accepting the dominant culture as the norm. The assumption that culture is the primary determinant of academic achievement it can be dangerous, and counterproductive because while culture may influence in academics and achievements it does not determine who we are, no literature for this paper was found
determining that culture will definite influence, affect or help students with academic and or achievements. Based on this information it is very important to handle culture and cultural difference with great care in order for us to avoid assumptions about students, specially Puerto Rican first generation students cultural background. A nice example of cultural assumption was cited by Nine-Curt (1984) when she reported that a ESL teacher who was sincerely committed to her ESL students' achievement was nevertheless aware of many aspect of her Puerto Rican students. When the teacher asked the Puerto Rican students if they understood her lesson many of her Puerto Rican students used a nonverbal communication for example, they wrinkled their noses, not understanding this gesture, the teacher simply went on with the lesson, assuming that their nose wrinkling had no significance. It was not until she was exposed to a Puerto Rican gestures workshop that she learned that nose wrinkling among Puerto Rican was a way of asking "What?, What do you mean?, or I don't understand." Another interesting point is viewed by Gilbert and Gay (1985) they have identified four areas of potential cultural conflict: (a) learning style; (b) relational style; (c) communication style; and (d) differing perceptions of involvement. In their theory they suggest that
minority students should devote a lot of energy to what they called "stage setting" which will include a host of elaborate activities such as: sharpening pencils, preparing paper, and asking the teachers to repeat instructions, in order to gain more time to engage with the assigned task, but on the other hand they also recognize that such activities are often interpreted by teachers as either wasting time or not paying attention.

The values learned in the community in which the first-generation students reside may be fundamentally different from those at the university or college chosen. In order to achieve their educational goal, the students feel that they must reject the values learned at home, from their peers and the neighborhood, and take on the attitudes and behaviors associated with the work environment they wish to enter.

Some students are not willing to make this sacrifice; their close relationship with their family always affects their decision to attend college. Margaret Brooks-Terry (1988) stated that "those students most successful in preparing themselves for social mobility through education and work will do so at the cost of breaking or making weak their bonds to the family unit." Also, she supported that students who live with their family and work off-campus usually see college as the means to a
desirable job, but do not give college the required time or attention. In the words of some students: "I sometimes miss classes because the manager changes my work hours or my mother needs my help." The majority of time those students that work leave campus daily and as soon as their classes are over. They cannot attend evening activities on campus or go to the library to do homework.

Approaches to Enhance Probabilities of First-Generation Students’ Success

Multicultural Counseling Approach

"Although counseling has traditionally emphasized the importance of freedom, rational thought, tolerance, equality, and justice, it has also been used as an oppressive instrument by those in power to maintain the status quo. Whenever counseling is used to restrict rather than foster the well-being and development of culturally different persons, then counselors are participating in overt forms of prejudice and discrimination"

Paul B. Pedersen

Counselors often are called "change agents" because of the impact a counselor may have on a student or his/her family. Changes for counselors for our present-day students should include equal treatment,
students' empowerment, social justice, and a better school environment for all students. According to Brotherton (1996), counselors must have the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual ability to critically question the social impact of their practice, and also to critically question the oppressive nature of the theoretical foundation that supports their practice.

The intervention should start with an important factor: the counselor should re-think the meanings and outcomes associated with their education when they become professional counselors, the counseling process and their role in counseling.

Bateson (1979) states that a counselor must understand the cultural context in which clients' behaviors occur to have the insight and understanding needed when they work with cross-cultural counseling. Counselors working with a student from a different cultural background need to learn as much as possible about the client's cultural perspective. Hoare (1991) also encourages counselors to learn the symbols and messages of their clients' cultures, to recognize that clients are the experts on their own cultures, and to work to transpose themselves into the unique worlds of clients. This may involve reading and studying about the client's
culture, listening carefully to what the client has to say, and asking many culturally sensitive questions to understand the client's view.

Wehrly (1995) reports a very interesting view of how a White middle-class therapist from a highly predictable environment may bring an entirely different world view to the counseling setting and may find it very difficult to understand clients who seem to lack trust or who seem to be disinterested in planning for the future. She also argues that because of the oppressive environment in which some people of color grow from childhood to adulthood, a strong sense of self as a member of a particular minority group may not exist. This applies to many Puerto Rican first generation students when trying to make a decision about attending college or simply when setting short or long term goals in career development. Carney and Kahn (1984) recommend a highly structured and supportive training environment when working with cross-cultural counseling. They believe that it is important to be accepting of all student responses in exercises that involve self-awareness, because confrontation may be too threatening for some students and they may stop participating.

According to my experience with Puerto Rican first generation students
this is exactly the case with them. As soon as they feel intimidated or threat they stop coming to counseling sessions.

Brotherton (1996) also believed that as counselors we should face the challenges of preparing other counselors to promote equality and justice in American schools in the next century. As professionals we should promote and furthermore be prepared for diversity and multiplicity. Educators should not tolerate more ethnocentric and exclusionary approaches from counselors that refuse to accept the challenges in our classrooms nowadays. Therefore, Van Hestern and Ivey's (1990) idea of preparing counselors to understand their clients' developmental histories in order to counsel effectively is greatly needed and of great importance.

Examples of how counselors need to learn to listen to first generation students are given by London (1992) when he reported some examples of some interviewed students who were making the transition between home and college. According to him the students reported that they needed to renegotiate relations with family members, friends, and, in a fundamental sense, with themselves. These negotiations are not always accomplished easily or with a happy ending. The nuclear family as well as the extended family question if the student "really loved them." Also, the
fact of mobility (student moving to a residence hall at the chosen college) originates feelings of loss, conflict, and disloyalty, but it can also end with reconciliation and joy, if the family gets to understand the importance of education for their children.

One student's anecdote, shows these factors. "I didn't look like college material, I didn't talk like it. All those other kids had new clothes. They were just different. Probably because no one ever in my whole family or any relative I know about had ever went past High School, and it just seemed like that wasn't for me. College! It just seemed to me like a dream, a place I just didn't go to. Like I didn't have the brains, for one thing. It cost a lot of money for another thing. I really thought you had to have all these brains or whatever to go to college, and look to me now. Who would have thought I'd be wearing a college sweatshirt?"

If as educators and counselors we consider all these examples and work toward the same goal, which could be: To keep our students motivated in education, making them comfortable and culturally valued and respected, then we are becoming prepared for the new challenges in our multicultural schools and classrooms.

Brotherton (1996) brings group counseling as a valuable component when working with multicultural settings. She believes that there is more emphasis on an individualistic counseling approach. She said that importance is placed on individual achievement, development, and needs.
Due to the individualistic approach separation from others occurred, limiting the group counseling approach. The separation from others or from a group interaction reduces students' abilities to develop and strengthen collective identity and the consciousness needed for a deepening awareness of the sociopolitical and economic realities that define their lives and sharpen their capacities to recreate these realities. In this regard and according to Paulo Freire (1970) every counselor needs to be skilled at liberating their clients from self-blame and to encourage them to see their issues in a social context. If we pay more attention and develop different strategies to work with a larger socio-cultural reality, then we may be able to make choices about the future directions of American school counseling approaches.

Steinmetz (1988) and Weber (1968) also presents examples of who students feel when they make the decision of attending college. They strongly believe that many students are caught between two worlds: Family and Peer Groups who often place little value on higher education.

Weber (1968) explained that for some students, clothing (such as a college sweatshirt or a college sport jacket), food (not cultural food) or ideology (becoming more liberal concerning social issues than their
nuclear or extended family members or friends back in the community) became the symbol of separation between the student and their family members.

In this same line of thought London (1989) reported that self-presentation on campus or in a new environment can also be problematic for students, even when in the company of other first generation students. For example, one student self-consciously tried to change his/her "harsh" way of speaking and his/her "dems" (them) and "dose" (those). Some students stopped wearing the black clothes and big baggy pants that were so popular among their friends at home but that were an embarrassment on campus.

Suzanne Steinmetz (1988) pointed out that the student commitment in order to stay in college depends on the satisfaction with the college environment, the belief in a payoff, and the behavior of significant others. She brings the family component as an essential factor to consider when working with the students in counseling sessions. She explains that the highly motivated "good student" easily convinces parents that the investment in college is worthwhile because "success" in terms of a well paid and prestigious job seems assured. However, the first generation
student who lacks a clear goal, who is not committed to a particular field of study, and who doubts his/her own capabilities and objectives, is vulnerable to the pulls of his/her other role sets. Dropping out is a salient option for such students.

According to Suzanne Steinmetz (1988) the status cultures of class and ethnicity, together with the educational experience of the parents, are like a set of lenses. They focus on an option in clear detail or blur it beyond recognition, bring it closer, or remove it to an unreachable distance, or distort the option so as to create inappropriate expectations or fears. In addition, Puerto Rican first generation students experience multiple forces pulling them away from the college/school setting.

Weber (1968) stated that first generation students usually find themselves being re-socialized into a new status group. Moving from home, in other words, requires a "leaving off" and a "taking on," mode and the relinquishing of one social identity and the acquisition of another.
School Approach (5-12)

"Educators and policymakers have been slow to recognize that involving low-income minority parents in the educational process is an asset rather than a liability"

Frank Nardine

The best educational planning happens when high school teachers, counselors, principals, and administrators work together in planning techniques for a better educational system.

A research by Trueba (1988) suggests that even when bilingual education is not possible, instruction can still be tailored to children's cultural knowledge and experiences. He suggested that this cultural knowledge can be transmitted to the students in three important steps. These steps should be acknowledge and implemented by all cross-cultural counselors and teachers. The steps are the following: (a) placing students in learning environments that promote success; (b) identifying their learning strengths and modifying instructional strategies to match; and (c) developing a group of teachers who become colleagues and effective supporters of innovative approaches.
Nieto (1996) reported that in order to become a multicultural teacher you first need to become a multicultural person. Becoming a multicultural person in a society that values monoculturalism is not easy. It means reeducating ourselves in several ways. First, we need to simply learn more; second, we need to confront our own racism, and biases; and third, we need to become a multicultural person which means learning to see reality from a variety of perspectives.

Zwerling (1992) believe that alternative programs are successful for non-traditional students while students attend those programs. Following that idea, maybe the schools should plan more alternative programs that will help them when dealing with disciplinary issues, parents' involvement, absenteeism, and cultural understanding, among others. Perhaps, an alternative program can be more intervention with the parents. The school system might like to observe closely that the parents' involvement in school activities really makes a difference. The more involvement we have, the more we can observe students' success.

As explained in previous section of this paper parents play a significant role in their children's schooling. According to Ross-Gordon (1990) the low-income minority parents have not become involved in their
children's schooling to a degree comparable with the involvement of middle-and upper-class parents. There are many factors, but are the schools recognizing these diverse factors and working toward a better communication with these parents? There is very little information available in this regard, but according to my intervention with parents it is evident that there are lots of missing tools such as: (a) school systems not valuing low-income parents, (b) a basic sense of respect for low-income parents' social economic backgrounds, (c) sensitivity to their educational background and (d) sensitivity to language barriers. Some educators believe that the living and working conditions of low-income students hinder their school achievement and academic success. Why do they believe such thing? Federal funds and efforts are directed to low-income students, but still are these resources being presented to the low-income students? Are parents aware that these programs are available to them? Sometimes the low-income parents are not aware because of other factors such as language barrier, illiteracy, or just because of the fear of visiting the school. The school-parent relationship can definitely give answers to all the questions herein presented.
Although some educators and administrators recognize the importance of parents' involvement, there are many others who still need to learn about helping their students who have different needs and who come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. It might represent a challenge, but every teacher should be able to accept this challenge.

Observing performance in routine school work is a great strategy. The more structure and routine activities the better for the first generation student. According to many students in Western Massachusetts the routine helps them to organize their thoughts, and their academic responsibility. Also they believe that if they receive helpful corrective feedback they are able to engage in and complete activities or school work successfully.

According to Kronic et al. (1990), peer tutoring and cooperative learning arrangements have some important components for use with students at risk for dropping-out. The cooperative rather than competitive component is very important. Helping social interaction is required. The peer tutoring relationships and the cooperative teams of four or five students focus on the success of all members.
Cooperative learning activities generally go something like this:

After initial instruction by the teacher, students work together on practice activities until each student gets the correct answers. The students discuss the answers, reach consensus, and assess one another to make certain that each member of the group will demonstrate mastery when assessed individually by the teacher. Kronic stated that cooperative learning eliminates failure experience. Instead, students gain normal levels of confidence and self-esteem. An environment that expects and assists all students to do well is a place where a student feels accepted and secure. Cooperative learning arrangements greatly improve the quality of what are called "follow-up" activities.

College - Level Approach

Howard London (1989), a professor of Sociology at Bridgewater State College, stated that Enrolling in a Community College has become a popular and effective way of keeping pace, and families of first generation students who often approve this means of advancement. He believes that first generation students and their families feel less pressure or less feeling
of separation when the student enrolls in a Community College close to his/her geographical area.

Hsiao (1992) stated that the number of first-generation students is increasing significantly in higher education. Although few colleges or universities keep precise statistics on the number of first-generation students enrolled, there is general agreement that those numbers are growing as a college degree becomes a prerequisite for more and more jobs. The community colleges have always considered first-generation students who tend to be from working class families, or to be ethnic minorities, women, or adults as primary clientele. These new students to higher education in community colleges or in four year universities often face unique challenges in their search for a degree; conflicting obligations, false expectations, and lack of preparation or support are among the factors that might hinder their success in college. Also the first-generation student deals with living with two different cultures: one at home and one at the college/university environment. Adding to this they are also considered as unprepared students. In reality, some first-generation students are less well prepared for college life than are their classmates who come from college-educated families.
Hsiao (1992) also stated that the community colleges as well as any other colleges can help and assist first-generation students if they consider the following three approaches: (1) specialized outreach, tutoring support groups, and monitoring the programs that offer services to the first-generation population. The institutions need to implement more strategies to increase minority recruitment, but also strategies that will help to retain this population (2) bridge programs making possible the link between high schools and post-secondary institutions. This way the institution will help the first-generation students to confront the obstacles in order succeed in college. Bridge programs also can be used as an effective way to assist the first-generation students to overcome a lack of college preparation, and (3) College orientation classes reviewing practical skills, college procedures, and available support services. For first-generation students suggested instructional strategies are recommended. Placing the first-generation students with an emphasis on critical and analytical thinking skills, and offering interdisciplinary courses centered on specific themes that might be relative to them are also recommended.
Many of the recommendations for improving minority achievements are based on perceptions of who minority students are. Richardson's (1991) research reveals that a rich diversity of students' profiles can be described in terms of three important dimensions.

1. Opportunity of Orientation - when the beliefs guide, the students develop motivational skills to set goals.

2. Preparation - which involves the development of expectations about higher education and the participation with experiences that help the students to see college as an option.

3. Mode of College to attend - distinguishes between students who follow traditional full-time patterns of college attendance and those who enter college with adult roles and responsibilities.

Differences in opportunity, orientation, preparation, and mode of attendance influence the degree of attainment and transfer rates for all students but have a particularly strong effect on African Americans and Hispanic students because they are more likely to be first-generation and sometimes low-income college students.
Summary

As a college degree becomes increasingly important for individuals seeking employment, the number of first-generation students continues to grow in our classrooms. With the first-generation student pool comprised largely of members of working class families, ethnic minorities, women, and/or adults, colleges have the responsibility to prepare for the non-traditional classroom.

In order for us to make progress we need to create environments where different voices are heard and everyone is a learner; where tolerable discomfort in the classroom is encouraged, as long as it is needed in order to be combined with mutual dialogues of respect; where climates of tolerance promote the seeking out of diverse viewpoints; and where we strive to understand one another’s pain and views of the world. As counselors and educators we have the ethical and moral responsibility to prepare for the next century, counselors and other educators who personify humanism, democracy, and cultural understanding.

We need to start thinking as Haberman (1991) in order to create strategies that will help the urban schools to involve students in real-life situations allowing them to reflect on their own lives. He believes that
good teaching will take place when: (1) students are involved with issues they perceive as important concerns, (2) students are involved with explanations of differences in race, culture, religion, ethnicity, and gender, (3) students are helped to see major concepts, big ideas, and general principles rather than isolated facts, (4) students are involved in planning their education, (5) students are involved in applying ideals such as fairness, equity, or justice to their world, (6) students are actively involved in heterogeneous groups, and (7) students are asked to question knowledgeable or widely accepted assumptions.

Many people in our society perceive that college is for those who came from college-educated families who had always believed college was the route to employment opportunity. In the meanwhile many, but not all, first generation students adopted this belief later on in life as a result of experiences in the workplace or the military. A good job was also associated with social status and lifestyle. "I do not want to be a common laborer" is a common phrase from first generation students.

Studies suggest that students should have very detailed information about financial aid and how to apply for it. They should be able to see the various fees and charges totaled so they can get an overall sense of the
financial commitment they are undertaking. Financial aid terms should be well defined by the college/university in order to make sense to all students and parents applying to college. Chapman (1980) also mentioned that students should know how financial aid is determined so that students and parents can predict their chances of qualifying for financial aid before they apply for admissions or when they are choosing between public and private colleges. Some clarification options for colleges to follow are:

1. Total cost to complete the program chosen
2. Cost for one semester
3. Cost for one year
4. Breakdown for other expenses
5. How and when costs are paid
6. Options for paying school bills
7. Refund policies
8. Location of aid office and information
9. How need is determined
10. Financial Aid application deadlines
11. Detailed information about available jobs and conditions of employment
12. Percentage of students who work during the school year and their average earnings

13. Detailed information about loan repayment

14. Detailed information about available scholarships

15. Others...

Colleges should also have an earlier identification of students that might be considered "at high at risk" and perhaps during the admissions process provide them with a required college orientation course. The course should teach the student some of the practical skills required to succeed at college and familiarize them with college procedures and available support services. Other required courses should include, but not be limited to, a Critical Thinking course and a Speech Communication course. These courses will help the first-generation student to gain self-confidence, therefore be motivated to stay at college and to perform up to what society calls "high standards."

An "Academic Alert Program" perhaps will be a great idea to support retention, mentoring, and the tutoring program that should be available to all first-generation students. This strategy can be developed
by the academic support services at the colleges/universities. Some colleges and universities have this program already established by federal programs called TRIO Programs: (i.e., Academic Support Services, Upward Bound, and Talent Search Programs). The objective of these programs is to assist first-generation and low-income students to achieve their post-secondary education. The Academic Support Services, for example, provide the first-generation students in college with services such as: advising, transfer advising if needed, career advising, facilitating the interaction between students and faculty, providing tutoring, mentoring, assessment, support with administrative procedures, giving a sense of group, making the students feel part of the college environment, and encouraging the network within the first-generation community.

The colleges should provide a range of programs and services to counteract the weakness many of the students bring to higher education and to help the first-generation students to overcome the obstacles they face once they enroll at the institution.

Based on my interviews I strongly believe that more attention should be paid to the feedback of first-generation students. For example: (1) successful first-generation students have identified peer support as an
important factor in their academic achievement; they noted, however, that such support groups were most likely to develop among students from college-educated families as well as with the first-generation students once they felt part of the "system." (2) They also believe that they should have "places to study" where they would feel less restraint than in a quiet place such as the library, places were they can meet friends, meet other people from their programs or find support from people who are going through similar experiences or situations. (3) Students also mentioned the desire of finding friendly people in department offices, so that they could feel comfortable asking when they do not understand a procedure. This way first-generation students will take actions on time, meet deadlines and be more aware of their issues as a student in the institution and, (4) Receive better quality advising services, not limited to which courses they should register for every semester.
CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

When I began to work with first generation students to go to college, I realized the intensity and depth of the obstacles that these students confront during their high school years. I also observed that once the students are exposed, accepted, involved and respected they will work effectively during their high school years. I realized that once they reach their high school- senior year, lamentably they start dealing with conflicts of planning to attend a post-secondary institution, conflicts of separation between community-family-college-old friends-new friends, etc. These conflicts make the obstacles of achieving a post-secondary education harder and more difficult to overcome.

Through these years I also observed that many of my colleagues [counselors/teachers] have been politically involved with the public schools in Western Massachusetts. Others have taken the teaching/counseling duties as a second profession because of personal reasons, but for many of us, our political intervention grew out and became closely compelled and bound to the awareness of working with our multicultural
classroom. The need of providing the necessary tools to first generation students to succeed in school/college has become our primary objective when planning our classes or when advising our students. Our classrooms and guidance departments have developed and expanded with multicultural understanding.

As a young first generation to college professional, I recall scenes of my parents trying to help me with my school work, not knowing how to write or how to read, but wanting to be involved in my education. Although I saw a different perspective after completing my bachelor’s degree I still knew that my parents believed in my academic performance. After the bachelor’s the expectation was to find employment and to get married. The formation given did not guide me towards society norms; I wanted to continue expanding my knowledge horizons. This formation and memories have been with me ever since and in every educational endeavor that I make and continue to do. My parents and the desire to become an agent of change in others are the strengths of this study and the powerful tools that I use when working with first generation students.
This research was conducted as a pilot [case] study. Main data were collected by surveys and supplemental data were gathered from informal interviews.

According to Patton (1990), case studies become useful where one needs to understand some special people, a particular problem, or a unique situation. The public schools where the study took place offered the opportunity to work with Puerto Rican first generation students who were considered potential research participants. These students added wisdom, important factors to consider, and furthermore, they made me aware of the needs of first generation-students to college in their community and in our schools/universities.

The focus on Puerto Rican first generation students' perceptions responded to my interest in how they make the decision to register in certain courses, to enroll in a pre-college program, and to think about entering a post-secondary education. What is limiting our first generation students? Why are these students not applying to college or why do they not qualify for college entrance? What are some of the conflicts? How are the parents, educators and counselors helping? What are the students' perceptions of their ability to resolve or work with these conflicts? In
search for answers to these questions I decided to conduct meetings with selected high school students from an academic after school program. I administered a survey to 30 students who are receiving support at their high school through an academic after school program and also surveyed another 30 participants that are not receiving support from an academic after school program in order to compare their view through academics and their perception to achieve a post-secondary education.

Setting

The setting for this study took place in various public high schools serving Puerto Rican first generation students in Western Massachusetts. These schools work not only with a great number of multicultural students, but specifically with a great number of Puerto Rican first generation students to college. Some teachers, counselors and administrators working in these schools are making an effort to produce citizens who are well-educated. The sensitivity to these students is also mastered by these teachers/counselors. The data suggested that some of these professionals are respectful and appreciative of all races and cultures.
The schools also represent the combined efforts and cultural awareness of hundreds of professionals and other people who have a vision and a new perception of a first-generation student in the classroom. These schools are located in a historical geographical area in Western Massachusetts. The Hispanic population in the cities where these schools are located increased at a large number [doubling the population] in 1980-1990, and making it one of the largest concentrations of Hispanics in the Commonwealth. Presently, 55% of the students enrolled in these schools are minorities. These cities changed from rich farms to cities with limited resources. The rich farm lands of the Connecticut Valley have now faded, leaving behind a large group of jobless Puerto Rican workers lured to the cities by inexpensive housing. A declining manufacturing base and a weak economy created a growing number of families and individuals below the poverty line in the region. These facts also reflected in drop-out rates in the area schools, particularly among minority secondary school students. The absence of career ladders for those lacking a post-secondary education make high levels of high school drop outs and low levels of academic achievement in secondary schools. The impact of the deep recession that Massachusetts experienced in the late 1980’s and early
1990’s has left local governments facing a new fiscal austerity. This austerity has been particularly difficult for the older cities [Springfield, Holyoke, Chicopee, New Bedford, Lawrence among others] with an already limited tax base. Simultaneously, a growing educationally disadvantaged population is requiring more expanded support services. The school system has had difficulty meeting the need for increased supplementary programs including but not limiting to bilingual education.

An example of this crucial economical factor is Holyoke, where the median household income $11,088 which is 36% below the median for the Commonwealth (Census of Population, 1990). An anonymous article from The Boston Globe Magazine described Holyoke this was:

“Holyoke could use some good news about itself. Mired in poverty and joblessness, its population is not only changing but shrinking ... Holyoke has become a symbol for all that is wrong with cities: vacant downtown storefronts, a thriving shopping mall on the outskirts of town, and-most of critical of all—racial division.”

This is a city with very few resources to provide the kinds of outreach and academic and personal support needed by the vast majority of at risk youths in the school system. Although distinctly different in
terms of ethnicity, support for education, and environment, both cities served in this pilot study share characteristics which make the first generation students and their families a close homogeneous group for this study. A relatively high proportion of families in Holyoke (41%) and Chicopee (27%) have incomes at or below 150% of poverty. This is well above the proportion (20%) of Massachusetts residents who have incomes at or below 150% of poverty (Census of Population (1990). Figure 1 shows the poverty indicator.

Figure 1. Poverty Indicator

- Families at or below 150% of poverty whose children would be benefited from an academic after school program as academic support. Source: 1990 Census of Population.
Holyoke in particular, has one of the highest concentrations of socio-economically disadvantage families in Commonwealth with an incidence of poverty that is more than twice that of the state as a whole. The city ranks among the top three communities in the state in the percentage of school children receiving AFDC or Transitional Assistance benefits. Approximately, one third of all families in Holyoke are headed by women and those which include children under 18, approximately 69% have incomes below poverty. Chicopee’s percentage of families at or below 150% of poverty, although less than that of Holyoke’s, is still than a third greater than that of the state as a whole.

According to the 1990 Census of Population; the target population area is also characterized by a very low level of educational achievement as shown in figure 2 on next page. While the statewide percentage of adult persons (25 and over) with a bachelor’s degree is 17% comparable educational attainment figures for Holyoke (10%) and Chicopee (7%) are nearly one-half that of the average for the state. Further, attainment levels of Hispanic adults origin in Holyoke are even lower. Only 2% of Hispanic adults in Holyoke have a bachelor’s degree, compared to the 8% bachelor’s degree attainment rate of the Hispanic population statewide. In
Holyoke 59% of Hispanic adults do not have a high school diploma. Of note is the educational attainment of Chicopee’s small but upwardly mobile Hispanic population which is comparative high (11%), and significantly above that of its non-minority counterpart. However, in Chicopee the non-minority population has a very low attainment rate which at 7% is less than half of the state average.

Figure 2. Educational Attainment of Total Hispanic Population

Source: 1990 Census of Population

According to a 1994 High School Survey performed by the superintendent’s office the schools not only serve a high percentage of economically disadvantage students and low educational attainment, a quarter to one-third of the students that enter 9th grade in these schools do
not remain in school. The 9th-12th grade drop-out rates at the Chicopee and Holyoke target schools are some of the highest in the state. Holyoke ranks among the top eight (8) school districts and Chicopee among the top 17 school districts out of 351 in the Commonwealth in terms of the highest levels of drop-outs. Figure (3) will illustrate how the target school drop-out rates far exceed the state average.

![Drop-out Rates](image)

Figure 3. Drop-out Rates

These high drop-out rates are consistent with national findings that poverty is a major barrier to educational attainment at all levels. National studies show that the family income background of youth influences how
likely they are to successfully complete high school. The probability of a single 18-24 year old from a low income background (bottom income quartile) completing a high school degree is 66%, while a 18-24 year old from a high income background (top income quartile) has a 95% percent chance of completing a high degree (Mortenson, 1994).

In this same line of thought it is very important to recognize how sensible can we be with the ratio of students to counselors. This factor is very inadequate, however the educational budget cuts have leave them with no much room for improvement. Although the ratio of students to counselors at the target schools has improved over the past several years as communities have slowly begun to recover from the massive cuts in resources (25%) experienced when state funding for public schools fell to historic lows in the late 1980’s, the level of counseling support remains far from ideal. The recommended ratio of students to counselors according to the American School Counselor Association is 100:1. Figure 4 shows that the student/counselor ratios at most of the target schools are twice the recommended ratio and more than two and a half times the recommended ratio at Chicopee High School (Please see figure 4 on next page).
Table 2. Full-Time Counselors- Fall 1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Number of Counselors</th>
<th>Student/Counselor Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holyoke High School</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>199/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean Technical High</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>175/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicopee High School</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>265/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicopee Comp High</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>214/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: This data reflects results from a Target School Survey, 1995

This same survey also indicated a lack of services comparable to those which could be provided by adding more academic after school programs. These schools really need to receive more commitment in order to provide the intensive academic and personal support services needed by these disadvantage high school students. Figure 4 illustrates the inadequacy of services provided by target schools in academic services and motivational activities. It was evident that these services were inadequate in order to meet the documented need for services (please see figure 4 on next page).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Holyoke High</th>
<th>Dean Technical</th>
<th>Chicopee High</th>
<th>Chicopee Comp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT FOR LOW INCOME</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRIDGE FOR COLLEGE BOUND SENIORS</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMER INSTRUCTION PROGRAM</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study Skills</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAT Prep</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td>Tutoring</td>
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<td>S</td>
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<td>COUNSELING</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>O</td>
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<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
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<td>O</td>
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<td>Personal</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
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<td>O</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 or more counseling contacts per year</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computerized Career Assessment</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>POSTSECONDARY FINANCIAL AID</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information of Post-secondary Opportunities</td>
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<td>O</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Post-secondary Admission Assistance</td>
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<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Aid Workshops</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Assistance with Financial Aid Applications</td>
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<td>O</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Need</td>
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<td>O</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Ed Plan</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodic Evaluation</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULTURAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Trips</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialization Skills</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= Not provided  O= Occasionally provided (50% need met)  A= Always provided (100% need met)  S= Seldom provided (25% need met)

Figure 4. Survey for Educational Services & Activities Available at Target Schools: 1995
Data Collection Method

Surveys and interviews were used as the primary data collection method. (See Appendix A for the format that was used.) The surveys were designed to identify the purpose of the study which is to explore Puerto Rican first generation students’ perceptions of their ability to resolve conflicts when planning a post-secondary education.

Two groups were generated so that the survey could be analyzed in a systematic way. The survey guide links and is associated with the theoretical and empirical literature on first generation students and minority students in our classrooms. In order to compare the two groups, I used a “triangulation theory” (Mathison, 1988), which ensured a higher degree of reliability and validity in the data obtained. As used in psychometrics, the term reliability in this study reflects the consistency. The consistency of scores obtained by the same group when surveyed with the identical survey represents the study reliability. To ensure the validity factor analysis were performed in order to provide a direct check on how well the survey fulfilled the purpose of the study. Also, factor analysis and cluster methods recognized more than the degree to which the test fulfilled the purpose of the study, it actually presented what the test was
measuring: “Puerto Rican first-generation students’ perceptions in regards to their counseling services.”

Thirty Puerto Rican first generation students receiving support services through an after school program were surveyed for this study and 30 other Puerto Rican first generation students who are not officially receiving support services from an after school program were also surveyed in order to compared the data. The students who received support services through an after school program were compared to the students who did not receive support services to compare and explore how much they believe that the support services received were valuable. The surveys as well as some informal interviews were used to illustrate how Puerto Rican first generation students feel toward their guidance counseling services and how they believe that the support services received through an after school program have helped them with planning for a post-secondary education. This study helped educators and counselors to understand and visualize students’ perceptions from their own points of view. The researcher, ultimately, interpreted the understanding and visualization of the meaning of the phenomenon for the participants. Participants were encouraged to answer the surveys based
on their experiences and their expectations about the services that they were receiving at their high schools. During the analysis I used direct quotes from their answers, so that I can reveal their emotions, “the ways they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences and their basic perceptions…” (Patton, 1990).

Participants and Demographics

Thirty Puerto Rican first generation high school students (representing group A) who were receiving support services through an after school program were surveyed as well as another 30 Puerto Rican first generation students (representing group B) who are not receiving support services through an after school program. All these participants met the criteria established for this study, as they a Puerto Rican students who are also the first generation to go to college.

From Group A 12 participants were male students and 17 females, and six (6) are from families with only one Puerto Rican parent and 24 from families with two Puerto Rican parents. Group B was composed of 17 males and 13 females and eight (8) from only one Puerto Rican Parents and 22 from two Puerto Rican parents. All students were attending high
school and their grades range from 9th grade through 12th grade. From Group A, 26 participants (87%) come from a low-income household and four (4) a (13%) are not considered low-income students according to the federal income guideline used in this study. From Group B, 24 (80%) come from a low-income household and six (6) 20% are not considered low-income.

From group A & B 24 participants (80%) percent were born in Puerto Rico and attended the public schools in Puerto Rico prior to their enrollment at their high schools in Western Massachusetts. Six (6) participants (20%) percent of the participants were born in the Continental U.S. and attended school in Western Massachusetts since their early childhood.

In regards to socio-economic background, 36 students (90%) percent of participants come from a low-income household. Ninety (90%) percent of the participants families are currently receiving public assistance. Eight (8) participants, (20%) percent of participants reported that they come from a single parent family household. Thirty-two (32), (80%) percent of participants reported that they live with both parents. Hispanic households are more likely to consist of married couples with
children than are non-Hispanic households, according to statistics by the Commerce Department’s Census Bureau (1997). In regards to the family size, 26 (65%) percent of participants have between two (2) and four (4) members in their nuclear family, and 14 (35%) percent of participants have between six (6) and eight (8) or more members in their nuclear family.

Twenty-eight, (70%) percent of participants reported that Spanish was the only language spoken at home and four (4), 10% percent of participants reported that English and Spanish were spoken at their homes, eight (8), 20% percent of participants reported that English was spoken at home.

Thirty-one, (78%) percent of participants became inner-city residents and some of them and their families had a hard time adjusting to their new urban cultural environment (neighborhoods, hospitals, schools and the community in general).
Procedures

Thirty participants were identified and selected through an after-school program and by direct contact with parents. Another 30 students were chosen from a group of friends from the formal participants in the after-school program as potential participants for this study.

First, these students were invited to a special meeting during this meeting the purpose of the study was explained. Upon agreement they became participants, but because the students were minors parental consent was required. A parental consent form was sent home with the participants. This is a standard method, normally used by principals, teachers, guidance counselors and the school nurse.

Second, I held a meeting to complete the survey. This meeting lasted between one and two hours depending on how much translation was needed per group and per sub-group because the survey completion was scheduled at participants’ convenience.

Third, the survey items required the participants to choose an answer on a likert-scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These options allowed the study to be fair to the student’s perceptions about the
academic services that they are receiving as well as to the fairness given of
the guidance counseling professionals at the participating schools.

After the introduction and presentation of the study, the students
were encouraged to ask questions about the study. The students learned
that the researcher working experiences and professional interest in the
study originated from the relationship with first-generation students to
college. Students also learned about the researcher relationship with
superintendents, principals, teachers, guidance counselors, local area
universities/colleges admissions representatives and local area business
agents who care about first generation students trying to reach a post-
secondary education. This introduction was a lot more powerful for the
students who were new to the after-school program, because the other
students have been working with the researcher in the after school
program for the past two to three years depending on their grade. All the
students openly appreciated the interest and agreed to participate as
necessary. Two languages Spanish and English, were used when
completing the surveys and the interviews. Code-switch usage, which is
very typical within the Puerto Rican community, was also used by the
participants and transcribed for the purpose of this study.

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Finally, code numbers were used to protect participants’ confidentiality. Their identity and all identifying references were disguised. Participants were reassured, both verbally and in writing through the Parental information and the Permission/Consent form that they all signed. (See Appendix B for a copy of Parental Consent Form.)

Data Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data is a creative process. There is no single way of organizing, analyzing and interpreting qualitative data. Patton (1990) suggested that each qualitative analyst must find his or her own process.

Patton (1990) offers a method for getting started on content analysis: after all, interviews are transcribed and copied, the researcher begins by reading through and making comments in the margins, organizing the data into topics and files. In the initial stage of the data analysis, copies were made in order to work with the data and a master copy was saved as the key resource for locating materials and maintaining the context for the raw data. All survey answers were recorded and
copied, and then read by the researcher. Surveys were read through and comments were made in the margins, in order to organize the data into topics and files.

This study involves case analysis and cross-case analysis. The case analysis was used for the participant’s profile or demographic information. Each participant was seen as a single unit for their spoken answers. Age, grade, school, language preference, etc. were taken into consideration. Participants were numbered from SA1 to SA30 for Group A, and SB1 to SB30 for Group B. Responses to each of the survey questions for this analysis were given a letter from A through E. The factor analysis as well as cross-case analysis allowed to cluster methods in order to group together participants’ answers to common questions or to analyze different perspectives on central categories or issues.

During this process, the surveys were read and the informal interviews were reviewed several times, immersing the researcher in the data. After intensive reading and analysis, four areas of content analysis were identified. These areas facilitated the search for patterns and themes. Themes were identified in broad categories of information. The categorization of the themes was based on the number of times that each
category appeared in the raw data, the frequency with which the factors were reported, and the explanation of the topic by participants. The categories provided with a good understanding and a better evidence of the data obtained, from which the researcher inferred and constructed meaningful propositions about students’ perceptions of their guidance counseling services and their involvement as first generation students.

After the described process was completed, four themes were found, which were consistent throughout participants’ responses. These themes helped to organize and present the most salient findings which were directly related to the stated purpose of the study and to the initial research questions. The themes were: (1) Puerto Rican first generation student’s perceptions about their guidance counseling services, (2) Puerto Rican first generation student’s perception about their parents assistance - how parents help their children through their academics and when planning a post-secondary education, (3) Puerto Rican first generation student’s perceptions about their teachers advising, (4) Puerto Rican first-generation student’s perceptions about outside-school academic program assistance, providing extra academic, personal and career support.
These Puerto Rican first generation students have, in general, positive attitudes toward their school and their guidance counseling services, however there is room for clarifying certain confusions in about to the guidance counselor responsibilities and the services that they are entitled to as students.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The results of this study are presented in narrative form as well as graphical, which will allow the reader to hear the voices of Puerto Rican first generation students. The primary questions guiding this study addressed Puerto Rican first generation students’ perceptions in regards to their guidance services and their ability to resolve conflict when planning a post-secondary education. The chapter introduces the four major themes generated in the data analysis.

The chapter starts with students’ perceptions of their guidance counseling services and how they see and explain the many barriers that they have overcome. Then, it will present how Puerto Rican first generation students perceive their parents assistance through their school matters. Next, it will present how they perceive their teachers advising in regards to their college aspirations. Finally, it will present how first-generation students perceive the support of an outside academic program.
Puerto Rican First-Generation Students’ Perceptions about their Guidance Services

The importance of feeling comfortable and accepted in the school setting is a vital factor for all students to perform well academically (Nieto, 1996). This study explored Puerto Rican first generation student’s perceptions in regards to their participation with their guidance department and their perceptions in regards to the services. It is imperative to present some of their answers in order to put the findings into perspective and within the conceptual framework of the study.

The introductory question for both groups explored weather or not they knew who was their counselor. Ninety (90%) percent of participants responded that they knew their guidance counselors, and 10% percent participants responded that they did not know or were not sure who their guidance counselors were. Group A, which was the group who was receiving extra academic support through an after school program and Group B, which is the group that was not receiving extra academic support through an after school program, were asked about their impressions concerning their guidance counseling services. The highlighted factors were reported as follows in figure 6 on next page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 37% percent believed that their counselor was only the person who helped them to select their courses versus 27% percent who believed that sometimes they felt that the counselors were only there to select their courses and 36% percent did not agree.</td>
<td>• 57% percent believed that their counselor was only the person who helped them to select their courses versus 13% percent who believed that sometimes they felt that the counselors were only there to select their courses and 30% percent did not agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 60% percent believed that their counselor helped them with personal matters, career counseling and college entrance versus 23% percent who believed that only sometimes this was the case and 17% percent disagree, they believed that their counselor do not help them with personal matters, career counseling and college entrance.</td>
<td>• 7% percent believed that their counselor helped them with personal matters, career counseling and college entrance versus 13% percent who believed that only sometimes this was the case and 80% percent disagree, they believed that their counselor do not help them with personal matters, career counseling and college entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 47% percent believed that their counselor helped them to search for scholarships versus 20% who believed that only sometimes they receive help and 33% percent believe that they do not receive help for searching for scholarships.</td>
<td>• 3% percent believed that their counselor helped them to search for scholarships versus 3% who believed that only sometimes they receive help and 93% percent believe that they do not receive help for searching for scholarships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 47% percent believed that they knew their counselor fairly well versus 53% percent who answered that they did not know their counselor fairly well. When asked a similar question 77% percent responded that they know their counselor only a little.</td>
<td>• 40% percent believed that they knew their counselor fairly well versus 60% percent who answered that they did not know their counselor fairly well. When asked a similar question 80% percent responded that they know their counselor only a little.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When asked if they believed that their guidance counselor’s duties and responsibilities should involve helping them with career awareness, college entrance, personal counseling, helping them to understand the school system as well as making their parents part of the process, 50% percent responded that they strongly agree that that’s the way it should be.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• 50% percent believed that their guidance counselor was not the liaison between their parents, teachers, and other school administrators, 27% percent believed that it worked only sometimes and 23% percent believed that their guidance counselor was the liaison between their parents, teachers and other school administrators.

• 33% percent believed that their counselor has told them that they could not enroll in a course, because they could not handle it, and 63% percent reported that they have not been told that they could not enroll in a course.

• 80% percent believed that more time is needed when they meet with their guidance counselor, and 20% percent believed that the time received was enough.

• 90% percent believed that their counselor has told them that they could not enroll in a course, because they could not handle it, and 10% percent reported that they have not been told that they could not enroll in a course.

• 77% percent believed that only sometimes their counselor only helps them to make important decisions in regards to their educational goals versus 23% who believed that they do receive help.

• 57% percent believed that only sometimes their counselor only helps them to make important decisions in regards to their educational goals versus 7% who believed that they do receive help, and 37% believe their counselor’s do not help them to make important decisions in regards to their educational goals.

• 93% percent believed that their counselor should be the liaison between their parents, the teachers and other school administrators versus seven (7%) percent who believed that their counselor should not be the liaison between their parents, teachers and other school administrators.

• 50% percent believed that their counselor does not change their courses in a timely manner when they are doing well in them, 27% percent reported that their counselors only sometimes, and 23% percent reported that their counselor does change their courses in a timely manner when they are not doing well.

• 67% percent believed that their counselor does not change their courses in a timely manner when they are doing well in them, 30% percent reported that their counselors only sometimes, and 3% percent reported that their counselor does change their courses in a timely manner when they are not doing well.

• 83% percent believed that their guidance counselor was not the liaison between their parents, teachers, and other school administrators, 17% percent believed that it worked only sometimes and none percent believed that their guidance counselor was the liaison between their parents, teachers and other school administrators.

• 93% percent believed that their counselor should be the liaison between their parents, the teachers and other school administrators versus seven (7%) percent who believed that their counselor should be the liaison between their parents, teachers and other school administrators sometimes.
• 77% percent reported that they see their
counselor only when the counselor calls them
to their office and 23% percent believed that
they did not wait until they were called.

• 70% responded that they felt comfortable
visiting their guidance counselor versus 13%
who sometimes did not feel comfortable and a
17% who always felt uncomfortable visiting
their guidance counselor.

• 60% percent reported that their guidance
department was a friendly place to visit, 23%
percent believed that only sometimes, and
17% percent believed that it was not a
friendly place to visit.

• 60% percent reported that they were
satisfied with their guidance department
services, 17% percent felt satisfy only
sometimes, and 23% percent were not
satisfied.

• 57% percent believed that they could see
their counselor the next day after requesting
an appointment versus 40% percent who
believed that only sometimes they were able
to see their counselor the next day and 3%
percent believed that they could not see their
counselor the next day. However, when asked
if it takes a long period of time to see a
counselor after requiring an appointment 47%
responded that it does take a long time.

• 23% percent believed that they could see
their counselor the next day after requesting
an appointment versus 63% percent who
believed that only sometimes they were able
to see their counselor the next day and 13%
percent believed that they could not see their
counselor the next day. However when asked
if it takes a long period of time to see a
counselor after requiring an appointment they
83% responded that it does take a long time.

• 60% percent reported that they were
satisfied with their guidance department
services, 17% percent felt satisfy only
sometimes, and 23% percent were not
satisfied.

• None percent reported that they were
satisfied with their guidance department
services, 73% percent felt satisfy only
sometimes, and 27% percent were not
satisfied.

Figure 5 Continued

As figure 5 shows in each one of the highlighted factors in this
study, the percentages indicate that Group A demonstrates a more
positive attitude toward their guidance counseling services than Group B,
who seemed to have some difficulties. The responses from participants
[Group B] implies that there is room for improvement.
Receiving academic support through an after school program impacts on how Puerto Rican first generation students perceive their guidance counselor and the services received. It is evident that for Group B, has more difficulty understanding and bonding with their guidance counseling services. It is imperative to understand that these first generation students need to see their guidance counselor as agents of change - as someone who cares and is willing to help. The students need to feel that they know their guidance counselor, that counselors are available and willing to help, so that students feel comfortable seeking for assistance. The counselor should be the professional who helps in course selection, not the person who selects courses, assuming that the student can not do better in some other course. Finally, the counselor should be the liaison between parents, teachers, and other school administrators.

Puerto Rican First-Generation Students’ Perceptions about their Parents’ Assistance

Parent’s involvement in student’s school matters is also a vital factor for Puerto Rican first generation students. In understanding parent involvement, it is necessary to first recognize that, historically, American public education has been closely linked with the community and the
family (Chavkin, 1993). On the other hand, we also need to understand that this relationship has changed over time and the situation today is vastly different than in the past.

In this study, Puerto Rican first generation student’s perceptions about their parents’ involvement is described as follows in figure 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 40% percent believed that their parents advise them when they are choosing their academic courses, 37% believed that their parents sometimes participate with their course selection, and 23% felt that their parents did not advise them with their course selection.</td>
<td>43% percent believed that their parents advise them when they are choosing their academic courses, 30% believed that their parents sometimes participate with their course selection, and 27% felt that their parents did not advise them with their course selection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 53% percent believed that their parents helped them to make decisions regarding their academic and future goals, 27% percent believed that only sometimes, and 20% percent felt that their parents did not help them to make decisions regarding their academic and future goals.</td>
<td>77% percent believed that their parents helped them to make decisions regarding their academic and future goals, 20% percent believed that only sometimes, and 3% percent felt that their parents did not help them to make decisions regarding their academic and future goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 53% percent reported that their parents advised them to enroll in pre-college program at their school, and 47% percent reported that their parents did not advise them to be enroll in their school pre-college program.</td>
<td>83% percent reported that their parents advised them to enroll the pre-college program at their school, and 17% percent reported that their parents did not advise them to be enroll in their school pre-college program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6. Perceptions in Regards to Parents Assistance

continued next page
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40% percent reported that their parents do participate in school activities, and 60% percent reported that their parents do not participate in school activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83% percent believed that their parents should participate in school activities, and 17% percent reported that their parents should not participate in school activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% percent believed that their parents felt comfortable with school personnel, 47% believed that only sometimes, and 43% reported that their parent felt uncomfortable with school personnel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53% percent felt that their parents opinions were not valued by school administrators, 33% percent believed that their opinion were valued sometimes, and 13% percent believed that their parents opinions were valued by school administrators.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% percent believed that language barriers affected their parent’s participation with school activities, and 40% percent believed that language barriers were not limiting their parent’s participation in school activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33% percent believed that the school has a good network with all parents, 23% percent felt that sometimes the school has a good network, and 43% percent reported that the school does not have a good network with all parents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50% percent reported that their parents do participate in school activities, and 50% percent reported that their parents do not participate in school activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% percent reported that their parents should participate in school activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3% percent believed that their parents felt comfortable with school personnel, 3% believed that only sometimes, and 94% reported that their parent felt uncomfortable with school personnel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83% percent felt that their parents opinions were not valued by school administrators, 13% percent believed that their opinion were valued sometimes, and 3% percent believed that their parents opinions were valued by school administrators.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87% percent believed that language barriers affected their parent’s participation with school activities, and 13% percent believed that language barriers were not limiting their parent’s participation in school activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none % percent believed that the school has a good network with all parents, 20% percent felt that sometimes the school has a good network, and 80% percent reported that the school does not have a good network with all parents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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continued next page
27% percent believed that the school does an effective intervention when translating things for their parents, 33% percent felt that sometimes, and 40% percent reported that the school does not do an effective translation for their parents.

10% percent believed that the school does an effective intervention when translating things for their parents, 47% percent felt that sometimes, and 43% percent reported that the school does not do an effective translation for their parents.

Figure 6 Continued

It is evident that in this study Puerto Rican first generation students are showing interest in having their parents in their school matters. Results also show that there are some limitations between Puerto Rican first-generation students, parents, counselors and other school administrators. Some of the limitations reflected concerns on issues such as language barriers, parents not feeling comfortable and a weak liaison between school and parents. Apparently there is a need for more communication and intervention between parents and school administrators. The results also demonstrated that students want to see more improvement in the mentioned areas.
Puerto Rican First-Generation Students’ Perceptions about their Teachers’ Advising

The way teachers think about their students as well as the expectations that they set for their students are a vital part of this study. This study supports the theory that if a student is academically challenged, then the student will work to capacity demonstrating his/her talents and capabilities. Becoming aware of various learning styles that all students, particularly ethnic and racial minorities - might exhibit will aid both educators and students. Learning style is only one component in teaching the diverse population that we have today in our classrooms (Irvine, et.al., 1995). Figure 8 in next page shows how the Puerto Rican first generation students perceive their teachers’ advising.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 47% percent reported that their teachers helped them to make decisions regarding their academic goals, 43% felt that only sometimes their teacher will helped them, and 10% believed that their teacher did not help them to make decisions regarding their academic goals.</td>
<td>• 30% percent reported that their teachers helped them to make decisions regarding their academic goals, 40% felt that only sometimes their teacher will helped them, and 30% believed that their teacher did not help them to make decisions regarding their academic goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7 Perceptions in Regards to Teachers Advising

continued next page
• 27% percent believed that their teachers have told them not to enroll in a specific course because they could not handle it, and 73% percent felt that this statement was never made by any of their teachers.

• 77% percent believed that their teachers have told them not to enroll in a specific course because they could not handle it, and 23% percent felt that this statement was never made by any of their teachers.

• 50% percent believed that their teachers told them that they should be enrolled in a pre-college program, and 50% felt that their teacher did not tell them to enroll a pre-college program.

• 30% percent believed that their teachers told them that they should be enrolled in a pre-college program, and 70% felt that their teacher did not tell them to enroll a pre-college program.

• 100% percent believed that their teacher listened to their concerns.

• 30% percent believed that their teacher listen to their concerns, and 70% believed that their teacher did not listened to their concerns.

Figure 7. Continued

As shown in figure 7, Group A, had a positive perception about their teachers advising compared to Group B, who demonstrated some room for improvement.

Puerto Rican First-Generation Students’ Perceptions of an Outside Academic After School Program

It is evident that neither the schools nor the guidance counselors can fulfill all the needs that our multicultural students bring with them to our classroom, but it is crucial for the schools and counselors to recognize that academic after school programs can benefit both parties. An academic
after school program can facilitate student’s participation, ease teacher’s fears about setting-up expectations, and to develop more self motivation in our Puerto Rican first generation students. Figure 9, will demonstrate how these students believed that an academic after school program can impact their involvement in school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 100% percent consult an academic after school program and receive help with school matters.</td>
<td>47% percent consult an academic after school program and receive help with school matters, and 53% percent reported that they do not consult other professionals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 100% percent believed that an outside academic after school program helped them to make important decisions about their educational goals.</td>
<td>• 17% percent believed that an outside academic after school program helped them to make important decisions about their educational goals, 60% percent believed that only sometimes they receive help, and 23% percent reported that an outside program do not help them to make important decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 100% percent reported that an outside professional from an after school program listened better to their concerns.</td>
<td>• 80% percent reported that an outside professional from an after school program listened better to their concerns, and 20% percent believed that an outside professional do not listen to their concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 87% percent believed that an outside professional from an academic after school program have had told them that they should be enrolled in a pre-college program at their schools, and 13% percent reported that they have not been told to be enrolled in a pre-college program.</td>
<td>• 83% percent believed that an outside professional from an academic after school program had told them that they should be enrolled in a pre-college program at their schools, and 17% percent reported that they have not been told to be enrolled in a pre-college program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8. Perceptions in Regards to an Academic After School Program
Summary

The findings presented in this chapter derived from participants’ answers. In the analysis of the data, four (4) main themes were identified, which helped to illustrate the nature of the issues related to Puerto Rican first generation students trying to achieve a post-secondary education.

One of the main themes was participants’ perceptions toward their counseling services. The students who responded were receptive to their education, however, their responses demonstrated a number of factors that could hinder their education and the possibility of achieving a post-secondary education. These factors were identified and connected to issues related to their perception of how their guidance counselor helped them through their educational goal-setting. Recognizing and understanding their guidance counselors’ responsibilities was very important, as was feeling comfortable when seeking assistance. Further, having the opportunity to see their guidance counselor when needed, or more often, seemed to be a crucial factor for Puerto Rican first generation students.

The second main theme was participants’ perception about to their parents assistance in school matters. There were some common responses
for this theme. The participants believed that their parents should be more involved in their school matters. They also recognized some limitations such as language barriers and parents not feeling comfortable with school settings. Parents’ feelings in regards to schools devaluing their opinions is also a detrimental factor, and does affect parents intervention or participation in school matters. Further, we need to keep in mind that some these parents did not have the opportunity to attend high school or college, so some of them feel intimidated by the formal school setting. Translation was a key factor for those whose first language was not English. Finally, we found that a better network needs to be established between counselor ⇔ teacher ⇔ student ⇔ parent ⇔ other school administrators and, for the purpose of this study, we add ⇔ professionals from after school programs.

Another main theme was the participants’ perception about their teachers’ advising. Participants recognize that their teachers play an important role in their educational goals, however they also recognize that they have not received support from some of their teachers. Although the majority of the participants did have a positive perception about their teacher helping them to make important decisions about their educational
goals, there were many participants from Group B who could benefit more from their teachers if their needs could be acknowledged. Perhaps, recognizing and acknowledging learning styles can be a factor that can benefit these students and their teachers. Teachers need to work and evaluate the “teachers & students expectations”, so that both parties can work toward one common goal.

The fourth main theme was participants’ perception about an outside academic after school programs. The study findings point to a vital factor, which is the support that an after school program can offer to the students ↔ counselors ↔ teachers ↔ parents ↔ other school administrators. The study demonstrated that the students who had the opportunity to work with an academic after school program were more confident in dealing with school matters, including counselors, teachers, and school administrators, and accepting that their parents involvement is an important part to their success in school as well as in planning a post-secondary education. Participants described professionals from an after school program as the people [agents] who were able to “better listen” to their concerns and who helped them and their parents to make important decisions about their educational goals.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Today, many social scientists and educators as well as school counselors have identified the importance of recognizing our students values and needs in a multicultural setting (Nieto, 1996, Ortiz, 1988, Pedersen, 1990). This study explored Puerto Rican first generation students’ perception about their guidance counseling services, and how those perceptions and interactions can be used to enhance the educational and learning process.

Sixty participants were surveyed for this study to illustrate how they perceive their involvement in school and how this interaction helps them when planning for a post-secondary education. The findings are merely based on their experiences and how they understand their school settings.

Overview of the Study

There were five (5) primary questions guiding this study. These five questions were asked in order to have a sense if participants’
responses supported or did not support the research and the literature on this topic. The first question posed by the study was “What are Puerto Rican first generation students’ perception about their school guidance counseling services?” In general most of the participants reported that they knew their guidance counselors a little. Some of the participants did perceive their guidance counselor as the person who “only” helped them with courses selection. For Group A, 60% percent of the participants described their counselor as the person who helped them through career counseling, college entrance and personal matters versus Group B, were only seven 7% percent believed that their guidance counselor helped them. For Group A 50% percent of the participants believed that their counselor was not the liaison between their parents, teachers and other school administrators versus Group B were 83% percent believed that their counselors were not the liaison between parents, teachers and other school administrators. Part of the reasoning for this percentage increase is drawn from the fact that Group A has a network established in the after school program from which the after school professional makes that connection between parents, counselors and teachers. At least two to three parent
conferences with teachers and counselor are required by the after school program.

The second question posed by the study was “To what extent do Puerto Rican first generation students believe that involvement in an after school program will make a positive improvement in their academics?” Participants responses illustrated a number of common variables. Obviously, Group A reported that 100% percent consult an after school program professional for school matters versus Group B were only 47% percent consult an after school professional for school matters. Group A also reported that 100% percent of participants believed that an after school professional has helped them to make important decisions about their educational goals versus Group B were only 17% believed that an after school professional has helped them to make important decisions about their educational goals. Both groups have agreed on after school professionals encouraging them to enroll in pre-college programs.

The third question posed for this study was “To what extent do Puerto Rican first generation students believe that their parents assist, support and understand the importance of their academics?” Participants responses illustrated common variables. An interesting finding was
demonstrated in this area, because Group A reported that 40% of participants believed that their parents advise them when they are choosing their academic courses versus Group B, where 43% percent of participants believed that their parents helped them with academic course selection. Due to the findings, Group A were asked to explain, and their responses pointed to the fact that they perceive the after school program as more active than the parents participation, but they do perceive their parents involvement as well. The same case was presented when they were asked about parents advising them to be enrolled in a pre-college program and when setting educational goals, they felt that the after school program had a stronger active role, while Group B relied on their parents’ advising. However, Group A reported that only 10% percent of participants believed that their parents felt comfortable with school personnel, versus Group B where only three (3%) percent felt comfortable with school personnel. Group A also reported that 53% percent of participants believed that their parents opinions were not valued by school administrators, versus Group B where 87% percent of participants believed that their parents opinions were not valued by school administrators. Further, for Group A 60% percent of participants
believed that language barriers affected their parents participation in school matters versus Group B where an 87% percent of participants believed that language barriers were affecting their parents participation in school matters.

The fourth question posed in this study, which guided the design of the study was “What are first generation students’ perception about entering a post-secondary education?” Participants responses illustrated common variables, although it was interesting to observe how Group A had some advantages that Group B did not have. For Group A, 60% percent of participants believed that their counselor advised them with college entrance, and career counseling versus, Group B, where only a seven (7%) percent received help. Further, Group A, reported that 47% percent of participants received help searching for scholarships, versus Group B, where only 3% percent received help. Group A also reported that 33% percent of participants were told that they could not enroll in a pre-college course because they could not handle it, versus Group B, where 90% percent have been told that they could not enroll in a pre-college course because they could not handle it. Again, the after school professional has an active role in this area and serves as liaison between
school administrators ⇔ students ⇔ parents. The liaison becomes
stronger because the after school professional gives consideration to the
fact that parents were not familiar with college entrance and it's process
because they were first generation themselves and/or in many cases they
did not reach a high school degree.

The final question posed by this study was "Do first generation
students believe that their schools' guidance counseling services were
meeting their needs in a satisfactory manner?" A scale item was
developed (figure 9 on next page) for this question in order to
demonstrate the participants' perception. Group A responses illustrated
that 70% were satisfied versus Group B, where only 17% were satisfied.

Group A

![Figure 9. Levels of Satisfaction in regards to Guidance Services-Group-A](image)

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Discussion of Findings

Participants in the study produced through their voices and strong opinions a great deal of information about their perceptions of their ability to recognize the services received by their guidance counselors in order to resolve conflicts when they are ready to apply for a post-secondary education. It was evident that all the factors presented in this study are variables to consider when a Puerto Rican first generation student is trying to reach a post-secondary education. Participants in this study spoke in
different voices, since the experiences of each one of the 60 participants has its unique personality, awareness, and consciousness. Occasionally, the participants appeared to speak in unison, agreeing on some of the responses, and at times they had different perspectives due to their unique experiences.

Overcoming the numerous obstacles in order for participants to achieve a post-secondary education have been documented, as well as the factors that seemed to be feeding these obstacles. Participants’ positive attitudes towards participating in school activities and taking responsibility for their educational goals seems to confirm what the research has clearly pointed out: Puerto Rican first generation students do have the ability to resolve conflicts in order to achieve a post-secondary education. These students do want to graduate from high school and enter a post-secondary education. The conflict is, “Are we ready as professional to assist them and/ or to receive them in our classroom?” In fact, Puerto Rican first-generation students want to be role models for their siblings, and they all want to make their parents proud of them. Further, they all want to have “a better life…” These students, all pointed to education as the key to the future. They also spoke proudly of their cultural heritage and family
values and recognized that their parents, as well as themselves, acknowledge education as the way “to a better life…”

The literature on first generation students has stated that minority students have been effectively denied the opportunity to receive a high quality education (Nieto, 1996). Further, Solsken & Willet (1993) argued that parents and children do learn, but that they need the opportunity to become part of the process. Without a doubt, it is important to mention that some of the obstacles in assisting these students are language barriers, and if the school does not provide alternative means for the students’ learning (Durán, 1992). However this should not be seen by any means, as an inability to succeed in school.

Participants clearly stated in their responses that despite their perceptions about their guidance counseling services, they still want to be involved in school matters and to succeed in school as well as to feel valued. Participants feel that they are ready to work with the school counselors, teachers and other school administrators. However, the desire of working together needs to be supported by both parties. Students believe that if they assume a more active role in their after school programs they can gain access communication with their principals,
counselors, teachers, other school administrators, and their parents. Some of the participants responses illustrated that most of the decisions concerning school matters are made by the principal and “some teachers” and that the students are informed after the decision has been made.

Findings of this study confirmed what the theoretical and empirical literature has indicated in terms of the positive effects of minority students’ perception about their guidance services. It was found that Puerto Rican first generation students are receptive to the notion of being more involved in their school matters. However, according to their responses, the obstacles to their achievement in school were described as external forces which have to do with their unique situations: family issues, economic factors, language barriers, community factors, peer pressure and in general being first generation students, which implies they do not have the same support system that a non-first generation student has.

This study pointed to the potential role that communication can play between students ↔ teachers ↔ principals ↔ counselors ↔ school
administrators ↔ parents. The need to establish and implement a two-way communication line was clearly indicated. A good working network is apt to encourage participants’ success.

This study also found that Puerto Rican first generation students do know the majority of their rights as students, but in fact they do not relate them to their experiences in school matters. Further, they all stated that they do not have a say in their teachers’, counselors’ or the principal’s decision-making. It is important to mention that these students feel that the opportunity to exercise their opinions in the school setting as Puerto Rican first generation students is minimal.

Another interesting finding was the perceptions that Puerto Rican first generation students have about their cultural values. They all spoke proudly, about their central values and how those values helped them to stay in school and try to succeed. This finding supports the review of literature, which stated that as educators we need to develop more culturally-sensitive approaches for our classrooms, but most importantly, for our school system in general.
Implications for Research

Findings for this exploratory study suggested directions for future research. The findings directed my thoughts to several questions which remained unanswered. For example, What are the perceptions that teachers, counselors, principals and other school administrators have about non-Hispanic first generation students? Is there a great deal of difference or is it similar?

Participants in this study were Puerto Rican first generation students. Would first generation students from other minority groups and ethnic/cultural backgrounds provide the same sort of responses or would they respond differently? I strongly believe that students from other ethnic groups can also bring forth other barriers and institutional realities that Puerto Rican first generation students did not bring up, or did nor emphases such as racism, segregation, discrimination and other “-isms.”

This study also opened an interesting door: the parents. I concluded the research with a great amount of curiosity about the fact that the majority of the parents were first generation as well. The desire that they had for their own children to finish their education was immense. There are many other conflicts (internal and external) that also need to be
address in order to better understand Puerto Rican first-generation students and their parents.

Another area for future research would be to examine participants’ responses to and recommendations about the many obstacles that they need to overcome in order to succeed in school and to achieve a post-secondary education. A future study needs to include the perceptions and understanding of school personnel about the issue of Puerto Rican first generation students in our classrooms, counseling offices and in our school system in general. The inclusion requires further research in order to develop and implement culturally-sensitive models and programs to foster Puerto Rican first generation students’ awareness of their school success and also to achieve a post-secondary education. These models and programs— for example an academic after school program— may change the dynamics of the education received by Puerto Rican first generation students and increase their academic performance in school, curbing the dropout crisis which is impinging on the dreams and aspirations of Puerto Rican first generation students and parents. According to the review of literature it is evident that there is a great need to reduce Hispanic students’ dropout rates, since its negative impact has begun to curtail their
opportunities for decent employment and their overall well-being, as well as jeopardizing the economic future of this nation.

Finally, when reviewing the findings and the implications for research, it is important to consider the limitations of this study, which were presented in Chapter one. Generalizations cannot be made about all Puerto Rican first generation students as a whole in public schools in Western Massachusetts, nor do these generalizations reflect the perceptions of minority students from other ethnic groups. The findings of the study speak of the uniqueness of the 60 participants and their perceptions about the guidance counseling services at their schools. The findings can be used as a working hypothesis rather than as a conclusion. The working hypothesis generated by this study can be used to understand and to develop awareness in more depth of Puerto Rican first generation students in our classrooms.

School principals, counselors, teachers, multicultural teachers, and other school administrators can use the findings of this study to generate their working hypothesis at their schools. These hypotheses will support
their commitment toward our multicultural classrooms and to provide more in depth teachers, counselors and school administrators development.

Implications for Practice

With regards to the implications for practice, the findings for this study could be used constructively for other schools in their commitment to improve Puerto Rican first generation students' perceptions about their guidance counseling services as well as their success in school. Participants learning and understanding in regards to their guidance counseling services is determined by many variables which encompass cultural, educational, economic, family and environmental/community factors. School personnel need to be aware of these factors in responding to the educational needs of Puerto Rican first generation students as well as with other minority groups.

According to both research and practice related to minority students’ academic performance, multicultural school counselors and educators can implement and develop effective methods so that Hispanic students can improve their academic performance. These professionals
need to become advocates and make sure that the public school engages in
the planning and implementation of methods, strategies and programs that
are sensitive to students’ cultural backgrounds. It is also important to
value the meaning that they make of their involvement in the school and,
their school achievements, in order to increase the overall ability- of
Hispanic students in the public schools (Casas & Furlong, 1994).

Participants’ responses addressed the need for the school to build
cultural bridges when working with Hispanic students and the Hispanic
community in general (Montalvo, 1984). Furthermore, the need to
develop a culturally-sensitive and trusting relationship between parents
and teachers has been cited and addressed a number of times. This
approach will clearly yield benefits and will foster communication, which
by definition, is culturally-bound (Plata, 1989).

Closing Words

The schools do not and can not provide all the academic and
motivational services that first generation and low-income students need in
order to complete high school and proceed to college. The barriers to
completing a high school and post-secondary education are becoming greater and are factors that we need to consider when working with Puerto Rican low-income and first generation students.

More than working with first generation students, the ability to work with Puerto Rican first generation students is a factor that we need to take into consideration when we choose to work with multicultural-educational fields. Recent data indicates (Current Population Reports, 1995) that the number and percentage of Hispanic students is increasing and is likely to continue to increase. We need to establish programs in our schools and post-secondary institutions that can meet the educational needs of Hispanic students. Enabling first generation/low income students to enter and succeed in college is one of the President of the United States of America’s newest goals.

An example of this increase is reflected in a March 1997 survey presented by the U.S. Census Bureau. The survey highlighted that in 1996 an estimated 28.4 million persons of Hispanic origin resided in the United States in 1996, representing 10.8 percent of the total population. About one-half (53%) of all Hispanic 25 years and over had at least a high school diploma in 1996. Then, in March of 1997 same type of survey presented
that 30% percent of Hispanic men had occupations as operators, fabricators or laborers. About one-third (38%) of Hispanic women worked in technical sales and administrative support positions. More than one-half (58%) of all Hispanic people rented their homes in 1995 and about one-third (31%) of Hispanic people in the United States were living below the poverty level in 1994.

It is true that, as in all surveys, the data are subject to sampling variability and other sources of error, but these statistics seem to describe very well Hispanic’s status in the United States. On the other hand, The census Bureau-- considered as the pre-eminent collector of relevant and quality data about the people and economy of the United States since the first census in 1790-- provides official information about America’s people, business, industries and institutions.

The completion of this study pointed out many factors that educators and counselors should consider when working with a multicultural classroom, especially with first-generation students. These factors can be consider and given immediate attention. Decreasing the barriers to achieve high school completion according to the experiences gain in this study is the way of working with these factors. The primary
barrier seemed to be the inability and/or lack of motivation to perform at
grade level. Major risk factors were; (a) students below grade level, --
students reported weak math and reading skills as well as lack of
communication, (b) lack of academic, personal and motivational support
system [school, community and family]-- students felt lack of support
services and lack of peer and mentor support (more minority peers,
teachers, counselors, administrators, and local business owners are needed
according to the first-generation students), (c ) time devoted to effective
studying -- teachers usually expressed that the students have poor study
habits, low-self esteem, and lack of structured study time, parents believed
that they are in need of affordable or available extracurricular activities in
the school or in the community, (d) lack of financial resources -- many
federal budget cuts have affected the educational system and the
community. The lack of community financial support, and the lack for
minority support groups are in great need for Puerto Rican first-generation
students, and (e) the lack of multicultural professionals at the school level
(more minority teachers, counselors and administrators are needed) --
contributing factors to this fact are financial factors, and non-acceptance
of minority in educational fields at elementary education, secondary, and post-secondary levels.

This study also recognized that there are other barriers to consider when working with Puerto Rican first-generation students and they become an issue or “common reasons” when the students aspire to achieve a post-secondary education. Educators and counselors need to decrease the barriers to achieve a post-secondary education for the Puerto Rican first-generation students. The most common and primary reason for the Puerto Rican first-generation student was failure to meet admissions requirements. According to college and/or university admissions representative the contributing factors are; (a) lack of adequate basic skills -- weak reading, writing and math skills, and also the inability to apply critical thinking skills, (b) failure to complete college preparatory courses at the high school level -- lack of bilingual tutoring for transitional courses, infrequent academic and personal counseling due to a large caseload per counselor, lack of mentors and poor time management, (c ) failure to identify first-generation students in the classroom -- students are usually labeled as underprepared students, (among other factors economic, educational, and family backgrounds are not taken into consideration).
The study also supported some facts based on observations, interactions and, more importantly, based on Puerto Rican first generation students’ voices. This study strongly support that in order for us to make a difference in our multicultural schools there are ten basic skills that we need to develop as multicultural professionals. The basic skills include:

1. To create an individual educational plan for each one of the students.
2. To develop individual and small group tutoring for the students
3. To create an after school program for high school students and to organize a club or organization for college students in order to keep them connected to the educational environment. This activity also helps with school/college retention.
4. To develop and organize recreational and cultural activities in order to make our students feel that they are included and they are part of the educational community in general.
5. To assist our high school students with college/universities based on their needs and not on our opinions as professionals.
6. To establish support groups including peer support, mentoring, role models and supportive faculty and counselors.

7. To recognize students’ achievement, but not only academically.

8. To believe in their ability and skills. They have proved to society that they want to succeed, why do we want to continue with the “hoops tryouts”?

9. To understand that language issues are not a learning disability and that the formula “minority = disability” is completely false.

10. To understand that awareness equals respect for your students.

If as educators and counselors we follow this approach, develop it and/or implement it, then, we can make a difference in our first-generation students lives. We need to believe that diversity of opinion is what multiculturalism and mutual respect is all about. It is important to mention that cultural values, education, respect, economical factors, family commitment and community are key factors to consider when working with Puerto Rican first-generation students.

Furthermore, this study also recognized that teachers, counselors, parents, students and other school administrators are responsible for an
educational process in which they all grow. Educators and counselors need to recognize that they have much to learn from the students just as they learn from the teachers/counselors. If educators become more of a role model, a mentor and/or a facilitator then, they will engage the students in an active and cooperative curriculum.

Finally, this study insinuates that empowering Puerto Rican first-generation students requires knowledge, experience and sensitivity to the students cultural background. Empowering these students also means to engage them in asking, learning about themselves, their families and their community. Emphasizing critical thinking in the learning process guide the students to use problem-solving skills in order to have a positive interaction with the educational world. We need to understand that when the students are valued and respected, they are able to develop the self-motivation needed to achieve a post-secondary education.
APPENDIX A

EDUCATIONAL SURVEY

Educational Research on Counseling and Student Services at the high school level as well as the first year in college have a significant importance to current educational approaches. Counseling and guidance are the tools for our high school students when planning a post-secondary education, still, a great number of Puerto Rican first generation students show a low number of the students enrolled in college track courses. This research will highlight the impressions that Puerto Rican first generation students in Western Massachusetts have of their guidance counseling services. Students will answer questions regarding their personal experience with their guidance counselor and whether or not they feel benefited from this experience.

Careful consideration will be given to the difficulties of the guidance counselor role in a public school setting with regard to caseload, limitation of time, available support, and the responsibility that each student also has in seeking help from their guidance counselors.

Sonia Correa Pope

Introductory Question:

A. Do you know your guidance counselor?

   a. yes
   b. no
   c. not sure

Please read each question or item and answer to the best of your knowledge and according to your experience.

1. Do you believe that your guidance counselor is a teacher?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree
2. Do you believe that your guidance counselor is the principal’s assistant?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

3. Do you believe that your guidance counselor is the person that only helps with course selection?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

4. Do you believe that your guidance counselor helps you with career choices, personal concerns, college entrance, and schedules.
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

5. Do you believe that your guidance counselor helps you in the process of searching for scholarships?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree
6. Do you believe that you know your guidance counselors very well?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

7. Do you believe that you know your guidance counselors fairly well?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

8. Do you believe that you know your guidance counselor a little?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

9. Do you believe that you do not know your guidance counselor?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree
10. Do you see another educational professional outside your high school for counseling and other school matters? (such as Upward Bound)
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

11. Do you believe that your guidance counselor’s duties/ responsibilities involve teaching a course?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

12. Do you believe that your guidance counselor’s duties/ responsibilities involve helping you with career awareness, college entrance requirements, counseling and helping you understand the school system as well as helping your parents with the process?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

13. Do you believe that your guidance counselor is responsible for reporting your grades?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree
14. Do you believe that your guidance counselor is the liaison between your parents, teachers, and other administrators?

   a. strongly agree  
   b. agree  
   c. sometimes agree  
   d. disagree  
   e. strongly disagree  

15. Do you believe that your guidance counselor should be the liaison between your parents, teachers, and other administrators?

   a. strongly agree  
   b. agree  
   c. sometimes agree  
   d. disagree  
   e. strongly disagree  

16. Do you believe that your guidance counselor has helped you select your courses?

   a. strongly agree  
   b. agree  
   c. sometimes agree  
   d. disagree  
   e. strongly disagree  

17. Do you believe that your guidance counselor chose your courses and you do not participate in the process?

   a. strongly agree  
   b. agree  
   c. sometimes agree  
   d. disagree  
   e. strongly disagree
18. Do you believe that your guidance counselor gives you enough information about college entrance and other college requirements?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

19. Do you believe that your guidance counselor changes your courses in a timely manner when you are not doing well?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

20. My guidance counselor changes my courses if I do not want to continue taking them.
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

21. Do you believe that your guidance counselor always helps you make important decisions about your educational goals?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree
22. Do you believe that your guidance counselor sometimes helps you make important decisions about your educational goals?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

23. Do you believe that your guidance counselor does not help you make important decisions about your educational goals?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

24. Do you believe that another professional outside the school helps you more on making important decisions about your educational goals?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

25. Do you believe that your guidance counselor spends enough time with you when you visit him/her?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree
26. Do you believe that more time is needed when you meet your guidance counselor?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

27. Do you believe that you make any effort to visit your guidance counselor?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

28. Do you wait until your guidance counselor calls you for an appointment?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

29. Do you believe that you visit your guidance counselor only when you need to?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree
30. I feel comfortable visiting my guidance counselor?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

31. Do you believe that you can request to see your guidance counselor and see him/her the same day?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

32. Do you believe that you can request to see your guidance counselor and see him/her the next day?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

33. Do you believe that when you request to meet with your guidance counselor, it takes a long period of time to see him/her?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree
34. Do you believe that your guidance counselor listens to your concerns?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

35. Do you believe that other school administrators listen to your concerns?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

36. Do you believe that another professional outside the school listens better to your concerns?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

37. Do you believe that your parents advise you when you choose your courses?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree
38. Do you believe that your parents help you make decisions regarding your academic and future goals?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

39. Do you believe that some of your teachers help you make decisions regarding your academic and future goals?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

40. Do you believe that your Guidance counselor help you make decisions regarding your academic and future goals?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

41. Do you believe that another professional outside the school help you make decisions regarding your academic and future goals?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree
42. Do you believe that you have been told by your counselor not to take a course because it may be too difficult for you to handle?

   a. strongly agree  
   b. agree  
   c. sometimes agree  
   d. disagree  
   e. strongly disagree  

43. Do you believe that you have been told by some of your teachers not to take a course because it may be too difficult for you to handle?

   a. strongly agree  
   b. agree  
   c. sometimes agree  
   d. disagree  
   e. strongly disagree  

44. Do you believe that you have been told by your counselor that you should be enrolled in pre-college courses?

   a. strongly agree  
   b. agree  
   c. sometimes agree  
   d. disagree  
   e. strongly disagree  

45. Do you believe that you have been told by some of your teachers that you should be enrolled in pre-college courses?

   a. strongly agree  
   b. agree  
   c. sometimes agree  
   d. disagree  
   e. strongly disagree
46. Do you believe that you have been told by your parents that you should be enrolled in pre-college courses?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

47. Do you believe that you have been told by another professional outside the school that you should be enrolled in pre-college courses?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

48. Do you believe that your guidance department is a friendly place to visit?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

49. Do you believe that you are satisfied with your guidance department services?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree
50. Do you believe that your parents are involved with school activities?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

51. Do you believe that your parents should be more involved with school activities?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

52. Do you believe that your parents feel comfortable with the school administrators?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

53. Do you believe that your parents opinion are valued by school administrators?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree
54. Do you believe that language barriers affects your parents when participating in school activities?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

55. Do you believe that your school should make better efforts in order to understand your parents needs?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

56. Do you believe that your school has a good network with all parents?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

57. Do you believe that the school does an effective intervention when translating things for your parents?

   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. sometimes agree
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree
Please be aware that the format is changed for items 58, 59, and 60.

58. In a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is very low and 10 is very high, please describe how you feel that your guidance department is fulfilling your academic needs.

59. In a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is very low and 10 is very high, please describe how you feel that your guidance department is fulfilling the academic needs of other students who are not first generation students.

60. In a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is very low and 10 is very high, please describe how you feel that your parents help you in reaching your academic goals.
Dear Parent:

I am a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst and I am presently working on my dissertation. I have completed state requirements and have been institutionally recommended for certification in Guidance Counseling with seven years of experience working with low-income and first generation students from high schools. Based on my strong believe, that first generation students need to develop the necessary skills to face challenging situations during their high school years and then when applying to a post-secondary education, I have designed a study in which you and your child (children) will have the opportunity to contribute to a developmental stage in this topic.

I would like to invite your child to participate in a research project that I am conducting. I am very interested in learning about his/her perceptions and ideas about their involvement in school as a first generation student. Their participation in this study will greatly benefit teachers, counselors and school administrators.
Your cooperation and your child participation in this study is completely voluntary and will involve a personal interview and a survey form. Due to the sensibility of the topic this interview may address personal experiences and raise sensitive issues, so they can choose not to answer to a question that might be difficult to answer. In addition, they can withdraw from this study at any stage during the interview.

To assure accuracy in recording your child responses, the interview will be audiotaped; these tapes will be listened to and transcribed only by me. All of the information obtained through the interview will be kept in strictly confidential and will only be used for research purposes. It will not become part of your child school record. Assumed names and code numbers will be used to protect your child identity and all personal experiences. This consent form is the only place where your name will appear and it will not be exposed or published.

I thank you for your valuable participation. Please be aware that I will be available to answer to any question or concern regarding the process, and outcomes of the study. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on first generation students in our classrooms and to help teachers, counselors and other school
administrators to enhance multicultural counseling strategies in order to work with Puerto Rican first generation students.

I have read and understand the contents of this consent form and I have discussed it with Mrs. Sonia Correa Pope. I give my consent to my child to participate in this research project.

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<th>Name</th>
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<th>Researcher’s Name</th>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


