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Libraries and Hispanic Students: A Study

Abstract

Purpose -This study describes Hispanic students' use of the academic library and their perceptions of factors that impact their use and satisfaction with it.

Design/Methodology -Using the literature as a springboard, a survey was created and modified to understand Hispanic students' perceptions of the academic library. The participants were recruited by the University's Institutional Research team, which could reach out to students who self-identified as Hispanic.

Findings - Generally speaking, Hispanic students are comfortable in this particular academic library, and felt that librarians and staff were available and kind. They are less comfortable asking for research help, largely because they self-identify as shy or are afraid of asking a silly question.

Research Limitations - Only about one tenth of the students did the survey and while many indicated they would be willing to participate in focus groups they were not, in the end, able to find the time to do so. Richer results would have resulted in focus groups, which were originally envisioned.

Practical implications – Librarians could usefully reach out and make a personal connection with this student population to facilitate students' asking research questions.

Social Implications—As Hispanics are one of the largest growing college student populations, it makes sense to understand their needs in order to do what we can to help them succeed in college.

Originality/Value -- This confirms other studies' results but much of the previous research was done at Hispanic Serving Institutions and this study was done at a Primarily White Institution.

Keywords: Hispanics, Latinos, Chicanos, Academic Libraries

Academic libraries can play an intentional role in helping retain Hispanic students. Evidence suggests that Hispanic students are not comfortable in academic libraries and evidence also suggests that use of libraries is positively related to student retention. In this chapter, I will discuss the semantics of Latino/Hispanic/Chicano, outline the history of Latinos in Minnesota, and describe the pre-college and collegiate achievement gaps between these students and others in the state of Minnesota as well as around the country. The research about Hispanics and the academic library will be reviewed and analyzed and finally, my own research findings will be presented. I will discuss some of the suggestions I would recommend for helping retain these students through practices in the academic library.

About 70 percent of Minnesota's Hispanic population is from Mexico, many with ties to family members that remain there. Prior to the 1970 Census, the census-taker would guess about the ethnicity of the person being polled, but since then, the respondent could answer yes to being Hispanic in a number of specific ways: Mexican, Mexican-American, or Chicano; Puerto Rican; or Cuban; or other Spanish/Hispanic (Garcia, 2013, 51) The strength in numbers that forces political candidates to consider the needs of a group may motivate groups to self-identify by an

umbrella term: “This explains why the term “Hispanic” has been used because it includes Chicanos as well as Puerto Ricans and Cubans, who often differ from one another in terms of background and political orientation. The term “Latino” is even more inclusive, because it embraces speakers of Portuguese (for the most part Brazilian immigrants) and other Romance languages (e.g., Haitians).” (Safran, 2008, p. 442). Valdez, in his book *The Mexicans in Minnesota* writes, though, that “in Minnesota it is misleading to speak of Hispanic or Latino population, when according to 2000 census figures Mexicans are 15 times as numerous as the second largest group, Puerto Ricans, and 40 times as numerous as the third group, Ecuadorians” (Valdes, 2005, 1). My respondents self-identified mostly as *both* Hispanic and Latino.

I will use the word Hispanics. Hispanics came to Minnesota initially both as to settle in urban St. Paul and Minneapolis and as migrant workers. Urban settlers worked in the railroads and meatpacking industries and farm workers came to harvest the sugar beet fields (Valdes 2005, pp. 2-5). The Depression was very difficult for them and some Hispanics resorting to begging and sorting out foodstuffs discarded by restaurants. World War II meant that Latino women entered the work force in ammunition and airplane factories, only, as with other women, to lose their jobs after the war. In the 1960s the Bracero agreement brought Mexican workers to Minnesota with understandings by both governments about the working conditions that would apply in the railroads, in the fields, and the meatpacking companies. The Chicano Movement of Minnesota was prompted by the destruction of the barrio on the West Side in 1960 and 1961. Organizing starts to foment in the late 1960s as Hispanics came together to protest very poor housing and working conditions. Education came to the fore in the late 1960s. In 1969 there were only 4 Latinos at the University of Minnesota’s 50,000 student campus. “The students demanded that the university launch programs of recruitment, retention, cultural activists and classroom education and the Chicano Studies Department by 1978 had 6 fulltime faculty members. By 1999 the Latino population in Minneapolis St Paul was 12 percent but the student and faculty percentages were still less than 2 percent. (Valdes, pp. 26-31). Throughout the last 50 years, state and nonprofit agencies have worked on the many pressing issues Latinos face, including housing, mortgage lending, and health as well as education. Others have worked towards having rich cultural events and opportunities to celebrate Mexican culture, including *Teatro Latino de Minnesota* and *Teatro del Pueblo*, as well as Mexican musical groups and radio stations. Today, a recent study showed that of those respondents surveyed, on average these Mexican Americans from Minnesota send \$190 per month in remittances to family members back home. (Solheim, Rojas-García, Olson, & Zuiker 2012, p. 252) Sometimes the reason Mexicans come to Minnesota is explicitly education. While immigrants in interviews talked about better jobs and money, as well as safety, one story was about a daughter, who told her father “Daddy, if you can’t [migrate], I’ll drop school.” And his reply “No, I don’t want you to drop out. I want you to complete your studies and if I stay here, you won’t be able to do it. I’ll have to go” (Solheim et al 2012, p. 246).

Hispanic students, as with all students, have both assets and challenges. Multiple assets include academic, financial, cultural, and social capital, including linguistic skills and strong family support (Nuñez, Hoover, and Pickett 2013, pp. 41-42). Challenges include family and financial concerns, including their need to support their families through paid work. Hispanics are almost twice as likely to have children, be single parents, and have elderly dependents (Nuñez, Hoover, and Pickett 2013, p.45).

Minnesota's Hispanics are a lot less likely to graduate high school or college than others. A 2013 Minnesota Department of Education report shows that 85 percent of white students, 59 percent of Hispanic students, 58 percent of Black students, 78 percent of Asian students and 49 percent of American Indian students graduated from high school. (Minnesota Department of Education, 2013, p. 10). Minnesota ranks second in the country for graduating white students from high school and 34th for graduating Hispanic students. (Children's Defense Fund, 2015, p. 5) Of the 59 percent of Hispanic students who graduate high school, college graduation rates (6 year graduation rates from 4 year colleges) are about 56 percent for this population.

Several programs around Minnesota help families and students understand post-high school options as well as practices and policies and procedures. These include Hopkins Parent Leadership Uniting our Schools or *Padres Latinos Unidos*; Tackling Obstacles and Raising College Hopes in Northfield; Study More to Achieve Results Tomorrow in Willmar, *Centro Campesino* in Owatonna, amongst others. Helping the student and their family think through the possibility of college and what that can mean is just the first step. Students also receive help with forms, study skills, and time management skills, as well as in-depth introduction to local community and four-year colleges.

The College Experiences

What are the issues when Hispanic students do go to college? There are as many scenarios as students, but one of the factors will be which college. Briefly, community colleges, Hispanic serving colleges and predominantly white colleges will be considered in turn. A helpful model was developed by Dr. Amaury Nora, a Professor and Director of the Center for Student Success at the University of Texas at San Antonio, and was summarized by Gross and his colleagues in 2014 that helps to tease out the factors for Hispanic students in college which include "(a) precollege/pull factors (i.e., precollege ability, psychosocial factors, encouragement and support, and external responsibilities). (b) Sense of purpose and institutional allegiance (i.e., aspirations and institutional commitment). (c) Academic and social experiences (i.e., with students, faculty, and staff within formal and informal capacities). (d) Cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes (i.e., academic performance and development, development of cultural appreciation and personality measures). (e) Goal determination/institutional allegiance (i.e., degree attainment, sense of belonging). And (f) persistence, which is influenced directly and indirectly by all of these construct" (pp. 180-181). The community college, Hispanic serving college, and predominantly white college may need to help the Hispanic student in different ways.

A recent Pew Report states that "Hispanics lag in bachelor's degrees is that nearly half who go to college attend a public two-year school, the highest share of any race or ethnicity" (Pew, January 20, 2015). Furthermore, Pew reported, the reason is poverty: "For example, about half of dependent Hispanics enrolled in two- or four-year colleges have family incomes below \$40,000, compared with 23% of white students. In fact, in a 2014 National Journal poll, 66% of Hispanics who got a job or entered the military directly after high school cited the need to help support their family as a reason for not enrolling in college, while 39% of whites said the same. (Pew, 2015). According to González, Hispanics are more likely to be placed in developmental courses which are "highly correlated with non-completion and overrepresentation" (González, p. 72) of ethnic minorities. An Achieving the Dream program

was initiated in 2004 to help Hispanic students succeed in Community Colleges. An analysis done at the 10 year mark revealed that factors including leadership, collecting the right data and using it effectively mattered, along with serving all of the students targeted, and not just the targeted few. Faculty engagement is critical and “lack of faculty engagement was the common attribute” of institutions that did not increase student success. A strong institutional research team was essential in tying these threads together. The Achieving the Dream website has a number of research-based practical recommendations on how to increase Hispanic community college retention, from advising through technology and leadership. Many of the interventions have to do with helping Hispanic students understand how to be a college student, whether through orientation, learning communities, and supplemental instruction.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) are defined in Title V of the Higher Education Act as not-for-profit institutions of higher learning with a full-time equivalent (FTE) undergraduate student enrollment that is at least 25 percent Hispanic. One study looking at the poor retention rates of Hispanic students wrote

Latinos are often treated as commodities by campuses, where the HSI identity is utilized to seek federal funding opportunities. Yet, in many of these institutions, targeted efforts to raise Latino academic performance is unclear, and those most likely to benefit from these student support grants are low-income White and Asian American students. Many campuses utilize these grants for whole school improvement with minimal planning for raising Latino student achievement (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012). The challenge, therefore, is to modify existing postsecondary infrastructures to serve their critical masses of Latino, underrepresented, and first-generation students. (Contreras & Contreras 2015, p. 154)

The Contreras argue that significant changes need to be made to financial aid, particularly for mostly part-time Hispanic college students. These students may attend college over nine years because they are “debt averse” (p. 156). Another study, an in-depth interview-based on 10 participants, found that while the Hispanic students interviewed found a great deal of comfort in having students, faculty and staff who looked like them at Hispanic Serving Institutions, the issues they confronted were the same --personal obstacles such as “immigration, divorce, caring for elderly parents, and giving birth to a child, to name but a few” (Arbelo-Marrero & Milacci 2016, p. 29). Academic English issues initially were larger stumbling blocks but “as time passed and learning and adaptation took place, the participants became more comfortable using the English language in their environments. Overall, the HSI campus experience played the important role of sustaining the English language learner by providing networks of bilingual speakers that could support them as they secured academic language skills and while participants adapted to the academic environment” (Arbelo-Marrero & Milacci 2016, p. 31).

Predominantly white Institutions can have particular issues, because while students are dealing with the same barriers, financial, personal, and linguistics, they are in a situation where they do not feel at home. Any number of microaggressions are experienced by Hispanic students, as is documented in a study that revealed some of them—being stared at, social isolation, being ignored by bus-drivers rather than being picked up, as well as unintentionally cruel comments, stereotyping, and insensitivity. One woman’s reaction was to put a sign on her door paraphrasing Hamlet’s sad lament—“To drop out, or not to drop out, that is the question” (Minikel-Lacocque,

J 2013, p.445). Mitigating this can be connecting with others who have the same ethnic background. “Thus, Latina/o students’ sense of how they fit (or do not fit) culturally within a university and their connection to other students of color play an important role in explaining their college academic achievement. Connection with ethnic minority peers was a significant, positive predictor of college GPA for our sample” (Cerezo & Chang 2013, p. 79). Too often, students do not find a campus climate that prioritizes knowing about the journeys or needs of particular groups of students, including Hispanic Students or connecting with others like them in meaningful ways (Nuñez, Hoover, and Pickett 2013, p.67).

A subset (at our campus an approximation of 50/500) of Latino students are undocumented. The Minnesota Dream Act allows these students to attend college at in-state tuition rates and qualifies them for state and private financial aid through a separate application process. “State officials estimate about 700 to 800 undocumented students will apply for aid through the Dream act, with about half that receiving aid” (Mewes, 2013, August 16). The undocumented students are difficult to identify but it is very important to serve them through targeting programs that help their Hispanic colleagues.

The Hispanic student population, whether in community, Hispanic Serving, or Predominantly White colleges face many barriers to successful completion of the degree that can help them find meaningful work at wages that will allow them to live a good life. Their pre-college experiences, both personal and academic act as obstacles to be overcome. The literature reveals finances, academic language skills, and familial obligations as some aspects that need to be addressed. Many of these are outside of the purview of the library, which will be addressed now.

THE LIBRARY AND THE HISPANIC STUDENT

The importance of the library, for many students, is the space itself. George Kuh, eminent scholar of retention, wrote, “Those students who more frequently use the library reflect a studious work ethic and engage in academically challenging tasks that require higher-order thinking. Although certain student background characteristics affect the nature and frequency of students’ library activities, the library appears to be a positive learning environment for all students, especially members of historically underrepresented groups” (Kuh & Gonyea 2015, p. 373). The learning environment can be improved according to a librarian at one Hispanic Serving Institution, for our students, by “the environment culturally welcoming, by hiring a more diverse staff, and by highlighting multicultural collections, and displaying library material and art from different cultures” (Lumley, Newman & Brown 2015 p. 52). Inviting art departments to have exhibits that focus on multicultural patrons can be a way of signaling our welcome to these patrons (Thorne and Williams, 2013, p. 259). One in-depth study of nine Hispanic students reported their sense of the library as a “shelter from the distractions of living in a residence hall or apartment. Matt described the library as a “haven,” or a place to study between classes before spending the evening at his job. All the students remarked, however, that the library was equal parts social destination and study environment; the tolerance for noise that accompanies group work blurred the image they held of a library as a very quiet environment best left for solitary pursuits”(Long, 2011, p. 509) and another study found the same-- “the academic library is viewed as a source for information, a place for quiet study, and, to a much lesser degree, a place for “social” study” (Lumley, Newman, & Brown, 2015, 51).

The space is important, but the use of the library is mission critical for student success. A recent study makes it clear:

The data suggest that first-year students who used the library at least once in the fall semester had higher grade point averages compared to their peers who did not use the library at all during their first semester. Further, the data suggest that first-year students who used the library at least one time during their first semester had higher retention from their fall to spring semester. Both of these findings held when controlling for demographic characteristics, pre-college academic characteristics, and college experience variables.

Further, we discovered that the types of library services that first-year students used were also differentially associated with their academic achievement and retention. Four particular types of library resources were significantly and positively associated with students' academic achievement: using the library workstations (indicating physical presence in the libraries). Accessing online databases, accessing electronic journals, and checking out books. Only two library activities were associated with students' retention: enrollment in the Intro to Library Research Part 2 workshop and use of online databases. (Soria, Fransen, & Nackerud, 2013, p. 160).

Many studies show that student success and library use are go hand in hand (Crawford 2014; Haddow & Joseph 2010; Merkley 2013) while concluding remarks often differentiate between co-occurrence and causality. Ideally, we would be there at the first step, when faculty design assignments. "Librarians must be a faculty coach and an assignment consultant" (Luévano, Travis, & Wakiji 2012, p. 55). One study found that almost 83 percent of Hispanic students liked the library, 67 percent thought that what they learned at the library was useful to them outside the classroom and more than 53 percent found them a support factor, more than the writing or tutoring centers on campus (Haras, Lopez, & Ferry 2008, p. 429). The same study though, pointed to the lack of literacy skills, as student considered doing research checking out a book or finding an article. While the university has a mandatory library instruction program "a minority of students reported information literacy skills such as interpreting and evaluating the information they found, or organizing and communicating information in new ways. Eight students mentioned using information ethically (avoiding plagiarism). Descriptions of research in many cases revealed a lack of understanding of the research process" (p. 509). Another study gave alarm as well, reporting that students polled at this Hispanic Serving Institution use "search engines such as Google, being the overwhelming place that students turn to for information 87percent of the time, followed by asking friends and family 63 percent, with libraries utilized less than 30 percent of the time" (Lumley et al, 2015, p. 50). Another study, however, showed no significant differences between use of or valuing the library by Hispanics vs whites-- both appreciate the library equally and are equally unable to describe a peer reviewed journal article, for example, although one difference was where the students accessed resources, the Hispanics more often at the library (Dabbour & Ballard 2011, p. 351). This finding was echoed in a study of two Hispanic Serving Institutions as well as one Predominately White University that found "because these were mainly commuter students with many other obligations, the use of the library was seen as linked to spending more time on campus. The use of computers outside of class was seen as possibly linked to the digital divide and the fact that for some of these students a computer may be a luxury item" (Torres, 2006, p.313).

The library can contribute in many ways to student retention by teaming with ongoing success strategies that can build relationships with faculty and students over time. Librarians being part of first year seminars and learning communities can help build strong connections at the outset of a student's academic career (Sanabria 2013, p. 99 while helping teaching faculty come to understand "library faculty as an essential educational partner" (p. 99) at community colleges and elsewhere. Sanabria reported on a project that used, amongst other elements, an information literacy component that helped support student retention at the community college while helping the librarians "determine what is important and relevant to students" (Sanabria, p. 97). Clearly, it makes sense to team up with a Latino or Chicano Studies programs, which is described at a California State College. The authors emphasized the positive outcomes based on "the multilayered instruction team...and the librarian as another role model and mentor" at their Hispanic Serving Institution of California State Long Beach (Luévano, Travis, & Wakiji 2012, p. 51)

The people who work at the library are important as well. "Librarians are also the gatekeepers between the library's users and information; they mediate the relationship between people and the library's collections by interpreting the user's needs and referring users to the best resources available in the library. (Long, 2011, p. 505) The importance of a personal connection for Hispanic students was made throughout the literature-- "multiple, hands-on, library instruction sessions would greatly benefit all students, and Hispanic students in particular, who may only seek assistance from library staff when there is an established, trusted, relationship" (Lumley et al, p. 52). Hispanic students in particular, tend to seek assistance from people with whom they have a clearly defined relationship and know from previous interactions, and these students rarely ask for help from someone based on their position (e.g., tutor, librarian, instructor, and so forth). In other words, Hispanic students do not ask strangers for help, and unfortunately, the reference librarian is considered exactly that by most students: a stranger with an uncertain role" (Duke & Asher 2012, p. 95). We must consider if it makes sense to have a specific librarian reach out repeatedly to the Hispanic clubs, classes, and student support personnel on a regular basis.

Methodology

Having found for a presentation about the academic library and student retention a number of articles describing discomfort for Hispanic students in the library, I wanted to study my own library. Starting with excerpts of those articles, I visited with individual students and student groups to start a survey. I then shared that survey with other students and groups and modified as indicated. In the end, the Institutional Review Board approved my study [837034-2], and the Institutional Research personnel sent my Qualtrics survey to the distribution list of their creation to the students on the campus who self-identify as Hispanic in December of 2015. There was an incentive of a \$20 gift card for every 20 students who chose to participate in the survey. Fifty responses were collected but not every student answered every question.

Minnesota State University Mankato is a Primarily White Institution with about 500 students who self-identify as Hispanic in a university of about 15,000, most of whom are white (76 percent) and from Minnesota (81 percent). The Library is mostly a quiet attractive space and has amoeba shaped furniture in pods around pillars that allows for a great deal of either privacy

or sociability. There are quiet and social areas mapped and there is a lot, though not complete, compliance with the understandings about each. There are 200 computers in the building, some in designated quiet areas and others in more social spaces. A large collection of textbooks on reserve supports general education classes, and is administered by the student senate but housed in the library. Technical support is available as many hours as reference service, and writing tutors are available about 6 hours a week in a small room near the reference desk. The Accessibility Services and Tutoring Center are one floor down from the reference desk.

Results

Of the 50 students who responded to my survey about 90 percent self-identified as Hispanic and 50 percent as Latino and 22 percent as Chicana/o. In conversations with students there is often mention of Mexico, and I regret not asking a follow-up question as to the thought process behind the names. All had visited the library, and the narrative responses used the actual word quiet 15 times but the concept was there in responses such as “get away from distractions,” place where they can focus, be peaceful, and private. After quiet, it’s clear they use the library for the access to computers—ten times, as well as mentions of the reliable internet connection. Research and homework was another popular response, augmented with phrases like “useful and reliable resources.” The reserve collection was mentioned five times. It was mentioned as a social space as well to study with classmates in ten instances. They also appreciate some specific aspects. Two mentioned the color printing and two only mentioned the technical support. One mentioned books in different languages. I was pleased that one mentioned it as a place to tour their friends and family.

Generally, the Hispanic students felt comfortable in the library, 23 feeling very welcome, 8 feeling medium welcome and 1 felt not at all welcome, the same was true of asking for general help and the picture changed only slightly when asked about asking for research help, when it went down to 20 percent feeling very comfortable, 7 feeling medium comfortable and 4 feeling not at all comfortable. That is problematic.

Digging deeper into this question, the following survey question asked their reasons for the previous responses. There was a little defensiveness in one of the responses: “I don't see why I wouldn't feel comfortable, I am a student just as well as anyone else. There is no reason for me to feel uncomfortable.” Overall, though, the results were pretty positive. “I feel comfortable for the most part because I love being surrounded by books and people but also because I can just hideout in a room and go unnoticed when I need to focus.” “It is easy to identify who is there as a staff member that can help or at least guide you to the right person.” “Every interaction I have had with an employee of the library has been very positive.” “The people I have worked with have gone out of their way to help me find the resources I need and show me how to find them on my own.” Friendly, helpful, respectful, secure, safe, kind were all words that came up repeatedly. On the other hand, one comment was about being stared at, several were about staff being involved with their own conversations that students were reluctant to “interrupt.” Several of the comments were about shyness and not knowing if it was appropriate to be asking the question: I’m just uncomfortable talking to people in general so asking for help isn't really my strong suit.” “I am generally not very comfortable talking to people so I wouldn't ask someone to help me with a paper.” “I feel comfortable because many of the people I know go there so

everyone is not a complete stranger and I am able to meet up with people and talk to them about different things which include academic and nonacademic.” “You don’t want to get up and ask for something that could be a silly question.” “I feel comfortable because many of the people I know go there so everyone is not a complete stranger.”

In terms of instruction, half of the students had not had any. Three had done the First Year Seminar library orientation, which involves them doing a scavenger hunt and writing down information from signs at the service areas to get candy prizes at the end. Some had learned from class sessions and said “very useful and explained in depth about resources the library had to offer that I did not know about” and “really opened my eyes to all the great resources that are provided by the university” and my favorite comment “It helped me to get close to the library faculty. I have had meetings about library resources more than two times. I am not afraid anymore to talk to them for help. They always say hi when I walk by now.”

The students surveyed were very positive about reference services. The word helpful came up seven times, but similar ideas abounded: “The librarian took me directly to the section instead of just pointing it out;” “ She took me to where they were and gave me a few tips about using the codes of the books to find similar types of works;” “She seemed friendly and knew where stuff was;” “ had to ask for help finding the book I needed, and a lady kindly explained this to me and gave me directions on how to get to the music library in the PA.” Only one responded, “Nope, I asked a friend.” Mostly they are uncertain as to the roles played by different faculty, but they don’t care as they said, anyone would tell you who the right person was or help themselves with your need.

I asked them their three favorite aspects of the library as well as their most problematic. Computers came in first and quiet second in terms of their favorite things. They really like being able to study there as well as do homework. Some honorable mentions included the ability to get help and use the research databases, the social meeting spaces, comfortable sofas and beanbags, our group study rooms, scanners, recreational reading, the full spectrum lighting for seasonal affective disorders, the technology such as cameras, laptops, and digital recorders. One mentioned the small rolling whiteboards that we have on each floor, which can make any space into a group study area.

Half of the respondents said none to the question name three problems you have encountered in the library. Their issues are those not specific to their culture—dirty bathrooms, slow loading computers, and people talking in quiet study areas, issues that concern me greatly.

The final survey question was to ask if they had any comments they wanted to share and that I had not solicited. Many of these are positive: wonderful resource, always willing to help,

Their suggestions for improvements have been passed along to the Dean of the Library as well as participants of a session where the results of this study were shared. These include:

- Finding a mechanism to enforce quiet in the quiet study areas
- More attention to cleaning and wipes at the keyboards (we allow food in the library)
- Advertise more library sessions
- Email weekly brief communications on how to use the library
- Constantly available drop-in library tours
- Invite residence hall staff to host library sessions

- Train and invite peer (other Hispanic students) tour guides for patrons
- Roaming reference service
- More discipline specific library sessions
- Bilingual brochures (separate ones for them and their parents)
- A personal connection in the library
- A poster that showed which staff have different languages
- Audiobooks in Spanish

Discussion

I see some common themes with some of the issues outlined in the studies I reviewed. This study revealed students who treasure the library as a place of quiet, where they can either in solitude or with friends study, do homework, read, and get some research done. As I did not have a comparison group, it is not clear whether these Hispanic students need/use the computer and internet more than any other student group, though it is clear they articulate their heavy use of the library's computers. While students did not comment on the lack of culturally relevant artwork or programming, it very much seems like an idea worth pursuing, both in public areas and in my office to signal that this space is one that welcomes our Hispanic students.

This study aimed at understanding the whether the discomfort I saw evidenced in the literature was true at my university. In this admittedly small survey, students' responses to general comfort and general comfort in asking questions is higher than the response to the comfort in asking specifically for research assistance. The responses speak to shyness, fear of asking a "silly" question, and the comments about discomfort with strangers speaks to the issues in the literature that point to the personal relationship being paramount. Lumley *et al's* to recap -- that students are only going to ask questions of someone with whom they have an "established, trusted, relationship" (Lumley et al, 52) as well as Duke and Asher's remarks about not asking strangers for help and most studies emphasize the need for the personal connection. In informal conversations with students on my campus, this notion was repeated again and again and my paramount concern is to reach out to these students so they feel that they have a personal connection at the library, through outreach to their student groups, their support personnel, and through email contact.

The faculty and the staff at the library are largely white, but the recommendation to have peer student group leaders seems feasible, though as a librarian it is difficult to entrust non-librarians with orientation to the library. But with solid training, inviting a motivated group of multicultural student workers who would volunteer, as part of their working hours, to lead very basic tours around the library could help our multicultural students feel more free to ask what might feel like a silly question to them of a peer, instead of an "authority figure," which a librarian might appear. It would also empower our student workers to be more motivated to understand more of the various services around the library and also increase their sense of being valued, thereby perhaps increasing their retention, too!

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