



Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 14 Issue 3

2020

AMAE Special Issue

Latinx Students at Minority-Serving Institutions

Guest Editors

Taryn Ozuna Allen
Texas Christian University

Charles Lu
University of California, San Diego

Emily Calderón Galdeano
Elevate Consulting Group

Editors

Patricia Sánchez
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho
AMAE, Inc.

Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa
Sacramento State

Lucila D. Ek
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Managing Editor

Christian Fallas-Escobar
The University of Texas at San Antonio

<http://amaejournal.utsa.edu>

ISSN: 2377-9187

**Factors Influencing Optimism for Degree Attainment in
Latino First-Generation College Students**

Laura F. Romo

Diana Magana

Gabriela Gutierrez-Serrano

University of California, Santa Barbara

Abstract

Latino first-generation college students face a unique set of challenges that are not part of the college experience of their non-first-generation counterparts. Nonetheless, many Latinos remain optimistic about overcoming barriers that might impede their educational pursuits. The present study was aimed at exploring factors that contribute to Latino students' positive expectations for degree attainment. Utilizing data from a large online survey administered at a four-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), we found that competency beliefs and persistent determination to overcome challenges significantly influences students' optimism. In addition, strong connections with institutional agents (largely, faculty and student affairs staff) emerged as significant contributing factors. Students who reported having close relationships with their parents also reported a greater degree of optimism about postsecondary success. Implications for programs and services to improve the college experiences of Latino first-generation student, enhance optimism, and increase retention are discussed.

Keywords: Latino undergraduates, first-generation, persistence, optimism, Hispanic Serving Institution, HSIs

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24974/amae.14.3.408>

Despite increases in diversity, colleges and universities across the nation continue to struggle to retain and graduate students of color to the same degree as their White and Asian counterparts (Shapiro et al., 2017). Latino students (both men and women) who are first-generation college students, defined as being the first family member to attend college, are especially at risk for negative outcomes (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Fisher, 2007). Although today more Latino students are enrolling in higher education than ever before (Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2019), retention rates remain unacceptably low (Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014). The discrepancy between the enrollment and graduation rates for Latino students has implications for their social, political, and community advancement. Examining the nuanced experiences of Latino undergraduates during their pursuit of a higher education degree is therefore warranted.

Models of student departure and retention have typically focused on the institutional and environmental factors that impact decisions to withdraw from colleges. For example, many Latino students who enter higher education are academically unprepared to engage in college level coursework. Pre-college factors, such as low high school grade averages have been linked to college grade point averages (GPA) (e.g., Friedman & Mandel, 2009). Financial limitations are another factor. Latino students are more likely than members of other racial/ethnic groups to work while in college and to fret about finances interfering with their ability to complete college (Longerbeam, Sedlacek, & Alatorre, 2004). In addition, many students experience culture shock once inside the academic environment. For example, Latino students often face discrimination and prejudicial behavior (Yosso, 2005), making it difficult for them to develop a sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Such factors decrease the likelihood of students persisting to degree (Crisp & Nora, 2010).

The primary focus on identifying academic and social factors that “pull” Latino students away from completing a college degree limits our understanding of the strengths Latino students possess that enable them to succeed. The role of motivation is understudied in this regard. According to Tinto (2017), “Persistence or its active form – persisting – is another way of speaking of motivation. It is the quality that allows someone to continue in pursuit of a goal even when challenges arise. A student has to want to persist to degree completion in order to expend considerable effort to do so” (p. 2). Identifying which factors fuel or diminish Latino

students' motivation can improve our understanding of why many students fail to attain a college degree, despite having strong values and aspirations.

One potential factor contributing to motivation is optimism – that is, one's tendency to hold positive expectations even when confronted with adversity or difficulty (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 2001). An optimistic outlook can have a profound impact on academic performance and persistence to degree, as it helps students cope with the academic pressures and demands of university life (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001). If students are not optimistic about succeeding, they may withdraw because there is little reason to continue to invest their efforts (Vuong, Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2010). Thus, a greater degree of optimism provides a source of resiliency to students when dealing with academic challenges. The current study contributes to our understanding of the determinants of optimism, or positive expectations for degree attainment, among a sample of Latino first-generation college students (both men and women) enrolled in a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

Competency Beliefs, Determination, and Optimism

To achieve goals, a person must believe that they have the requisite skills. Competency beliefs or self-efficacy (i.e., the belief that one is capable of success at a particular task [Bandura, 1977]) in achieving academic goals can contribute to optimism for degree attainment. In a longitudinal study of first-year university student performance and adjustment, Chemers et al. (2001) found that students who were more efficacious and held stronger competency beliefs tended on average to be highly optimistic about their college performance. Without a belief in their ability to succeed, even those students with the ability to do so may struggle to remain optimistic regarding academic success. In the current study, we explored the influence of competency beliefs on optimism for degree attainment in Latino first-generation college students.

Optimism can play a significant role in the retention of college students by fostering determination (e.g., Solberg Nes, Evans, & Segerstrom, 2009), also referred to as perseverance or grit. Many Latino students perceive that hard work, dedication, and effort contribute to their academic success (Cavazos, Johnson, Fielding et al., 2010; O'Neal, Espino, Goldthrite et al., 2016). As found by Chemers et al. (2001), optimistic students perceive their university experiences not as threats but as challenges, which they believe they can successfully handle.

Hence, perceiving that they are in control of their academic outcomes, optimistic students pursue their educational goals with greater determination. The association between the determination and an optimistic mindset was a research question of interest that was further examined in this study.

Connections with Others and Optimism

Another goal of the current study was to explore how interactions and connections with important others contribute to optimism toward degree attainment. For many Latino students, navigating campus culture and finding student resources are challenging aspects of adjusting to college life (Maietta, 2016; Torres, Reiser, LePeau et al., 2006). Positive interactions with individuals in academic, personal, and support service centers can influence a students' sense of connection to the university as well as enhance their ability to navigate campus culture, meet academic expectations, and graduate (Habley & McClanahan, 2004; Tinto, 2017). In addition to relationships with student support service staff, positive faculty-student interactions have a beneficial impact on students' academic well-being. For example, research has found that the degree to which Latino students perceive their intellectual capabilities is positively correlated with the frequency and quality of their interactions with faculty (Espinoza-Parra & Collins, 2018). Although support from institution agents seems to enhance student functioning, a recognition of its benefits specific to maintaining an optimistic mindset has not fully emerged in the literature.

Support from peers can also enhance student functioning by cultivating a sense of belonging to the university (Tinto, 2017). Latino students who engage in purposeful activities, such as developing connections to peers through clubs and organizations, are more likely to be satisfied with their college or university experience and hence are more likely to stay committed to their educational goals (e.g., Otero, Rivas, & Rivera, 2007). Relationships with peers from similar backgrounds are also beneficial because Latino students become aware that students "like them" do belong in the academic environment (Stephens, Brannon, Markus, & Nelson, 2015). As students learn that students with backgrounds like theirs experience similar academic challenges yet are able to succeed (Gutierrez-Serrano, Romo, & Chagolla, 2020), they may develop positive expectations for their own academic success. Little is known about the extent of influence that peer connections have on Latino students' optimism for degree attainment.

Positive relationships and interactions with parents may also be a factor contributing to optimism in Latino college students. In various studies, parental support and encouragement have been found to be essential components of Latina's decisions to attend college and make the necessary college adjustments (Cavazos et. al, 2010; Melendez & Melendez, 2010). However, a few studies have suggested that family connections create more challenges for Latino students because their strong desire to continue fulfilling family obligations despite greater academic demands can present obstacles (e.g., Covarrubias, Valle, Laiduc et al., 2019; Espinoza, 2010). The extent to which closeness with parents contributes to Latino students' optimism for degree attainment is in need of further study.

The Current Study

While college enrollment among Latino students is increasing, graduation rates for this group remain low, indicating a need to better understand student resiliency in pursuing academic goals. One factor that may differentiate students who succeed from those who do not is having an optimistic mindset. The purpose of this study was to explore determinants of positive expectations for degree attainment among Latino first-generation college students. This study addressed the following research questions from data gathered through a large online survey administered at a four-year HSI:

1. How do Latino students' competency beliefs and determination to overcome challenges contribute to their optimism for degree attainment above and beyond academic performance (i.e., GPA)?
2. How do Latino students' connections with significant others—institutional agents (faculty, student services support staff), peers, and parents—contribute to their optimism for degree attainment?

Method

Participants

Participants were 198 first-generation Latino undergraduates (154 female, 44 male) enrolled at a four-year HSI in Central California, in which students of Hispanic heritage make up at least 25% of the student population. The students identified as Mexican American, Latina/x, Chicana/x, or Hispanic. The students' undergraduate standings were sophomore = 37.4%;

junior = 28.3%; and senior = 34.3%. About 94% of the students ($n = 187$) reported that they received need-based financial aid. The mean GPA was 3.09.

Procedures

Survey measures were collected as part of a larger institutionally sponsored study. The study was designed to examine the factors that contributed to the persistence of underrepresented first-generation college students, in order to better serve their needs and improve their educational outcomes. Flyers describing the study were distributed across campus offices and sent out through email listservs. Announcements about the survey were made in courses in which first-generation students were enrolled. Interested students were provided with an individualized link to access the survey questions, which were answered on students' electronic devices. The survey took approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. The students who participated received a five-dollar Starbucks gift card.

Measures

Optimism for Degree Attainment. Optimism for degree attainment was assessed by summed ratings associated with two statements: “*I have confidence that I will achieve my academic goals*”; “*I feel confident that I will finish my degree and graduate.*” On a scale from 1 (completely inaccurate) to 5 (completely accurate), students rated the extent to which they believed the statements to be accurate ($M = 8.3$, $SD = 1.8$). Higher scores denoted greater levels of optimism.

Competency Beliefs. Competency beliefs were assessed by summed ratings associated with three statements. On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very often), students rated how frequently they attributed their struggles to intellectual abilities ($M = 9.8$, $SD = 2.9$). A sample item was: “*Do you ever attribute your struggles in courses to ‘students being more talented or smarter than you?’*” (reverse-scored). Higher scores denoted greater levels of competency beliefs.

Determination to Succeed. Determination to succeed was assessed by summed ratings associated with six statements. On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), students rated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item ($M = 14.7$, $SD = 2.7$). Two sample items were: When I experience academic challenges: “*I feel driven to put*

in more effort to succeed”; “I lose motivation to work hard” (reverse-scored). Higher scores denoted greater levels of determination.

Faculty/staff Connectedness. The extent to which the students felt connected to faculty and student affairs staff was assessed using a composite variable of summed ratings to two statements. On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), students rated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item ($M = 4.9$, $SD = 1.5$). The items were: “There are faculty on campus who I feel comfortable talking to about myself”; “There are staff who I feel comfortable talking to about myself.” Higher scores denoted a greater degree of connectedness.

Peer Connectedness. Peer connectedness was measured using a composite variable of summed rating to five statements. On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), students rated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item ($M = 14.4$, $SD = 2.4$). Two sample items included: “I feel well-connected to students on my campus”; “I have friends on campus that I could go to for emotional support.” Higher scores denoted a greater degree of peer connectedness.

Parental Connectedness. The extent to which the students had a close relationship with their parents was assessed using a composite variable of summed ratings to 11 statements. On a scale 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree), students rated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item ($M = 33.7$, $SD = 11.5$). Two sample items were: “I can discuss my beliefs with my parent without feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed”; “I am very satisfied with the way my parent and I speak to each other.” Higher scores denoted a greater degree of parental closeness.

Plan of Analyses

Correlations were computed to assess the relationships among the variables. A regression analysis assessed the influence of competency beliefs and determination (independent variables) on optimism for degree attainment (dependent variable). Grade point average (GPA) was included as a control variable, given its positive relationship with persistence. A second regression analysis examined the effect of close relationships with faculty/staff, peers, and parents on optimism for degree attainment, also controlling for GPA.

Results

Correlations Among the Variables

As indicated by our Pearson correlation analyses (see Table I), all but three of the variables positively correlated with one another ($ps < .05$). Peer connectedness was not significantly associated with optimism for success, competency beliefs, and parental closeness.

Table I

Correlations among the variables

	Optimism for degree attainment	Competenc y beliefs	Determinatio n	Staff/faculty connections	Peer connection s
Competency beliefs	.34***				
Determination	.48***	.39***			
Staff/faculty connections	.29***	.22**	.37***		
Peer connections	.12	.13	.24**	.48***	
Parental Connectedness	.26***	.15*	.24**	.17*	.08

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Regression Analyses

A hierarchical regression analysis was performed to explore the relationships between competency beliefs and determination to succeed and optimism for degree attainment, controlling for GPA. The analysis was found to be statistically significant, $F(188) = 23.39$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .28$. Students with higher competency beliefs ($\beta = .17$, $p = .015$) and higher levels of determination ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$), as well as higher GPAs ($\beta = .14$, $p = .032$), had a greater sense of optimism. The larger predictor was students' reports of determination.

A hierarchical regression analysis was performed to explore the relationships between the three connectedness variables (i.e., (1) faculty/staff; (2) peers; and (3) parents) and optimism for degree attainment, controlling for GPA. The analysis was found to be statistically significant $F(197) = 7.94$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .14$. Students with stronger connections to faculty and staff ($\beta = .20$, $p = .006$) and closer relationships with parents ($\beta = .19$, $p = .008$), as well as higher GPAs ($\beta = .17$, $p = .016$), had a greater sense of optimism. Peer connectedness was not significantly associated with optimism.

Discussion

The present study explored factors that contribute to optimism for degree attainment among Latino college students who are the first in their families to attend college. Our findings show that, while high academic performance contributes to optimism, confidence and determination to persist through hurdles also play a major role. More specifically, we found that students who are determined to overcome academic challenges, and who perceive they have the ability to do so, tend to be more optimistic about reaching their academic goals than students who are less determined and less self-efficacious. These attitudes and beliefs are fostered through meaningful relationships with faculty and student affairs staff, as evidenced by the positive associations among these variables. Positive interactions (e.g., understanding, helpfulness) with student support service staff help demystify the college process, as well as make students aware that they are members of a community that cares about them. In addition, a sense of belonging, increased confidence, and resulting optimism can be fostered through positive interactions with faculty, as seen with mentored undergraduate research opportunities (Lopatto, 2010). Faculty involvement can play an influential role on students' educational trajectories, even if the interaction is informal. For example, Shepherd and Sheu (2014) found that students who reported having more informal contact with faculty also reported higher academic achievement and stronger intentions to persist to degree attainment.

Our findings also point to positive relationships with parents as an important contributing factor to Latino students' optimism for degree attainment. Although parents of first-generation college students are often unable to provide their children with the information necessary to successfully navigate complex higher education systems, they provide strong moral and emotional support that sustains their children's drive to do what is necessary to achieve their goals. Parental closeness may foster optimism and strengthen persistence by instilling confidence in their children, which may buffer them when they encounter feelings of isolation and self-doubt. Relationships with parents also contribute to passion and perseverance towards long-term goals through the internalization of family values. Many Latino students report that they are driven to succeed in order to make their parents proud, and to repay them for their sacrifices that enabled them to attend college (Ballysingh, 2019; Gutierrez, Romo, & Chagolla, 2020). A close interdependent relationship with their families may also enhance student resilience by increasing their commitment to pursue a meaningful major or degree. For

example, motivation to attend college to give back to one's home community in the future may be a more powerful academic motivator for Latino than for White students because of Latino students' collectivist cultural orientations (Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall, & Abel, 2013). In addition, many Latino students report that they are determined to persevere not only for their own gain, but also to pave the way for others in their families and community to move forward in their education and careers (Menchaca, Mills, & Leo, 2016).

Given the influential role of parents on the development of determination and optimism in their children, it is surprising that there are few institutional programs (beyond freshman year) that inform parents on how to support their children as they deal with the pressures related to the many demands of college life. Current support programs tend to focus on helping to ease the transition process, addressing the common first-year challenges encountered by parents and their children. However, students pass through different stages during their freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years, with different concerns, problems, and needs at each stage. Ideally parents would be given an understanding of the university experience beyond freshman year, so that they can continue to be supportive as their children become upper classmen, and proceed toward graduation.

Limitations and Future Research

There are a few limitations to consider in this study. Because data was collected at a single institution, the findings may not reflect the experiences of Latino first-generation students at all HSIs. In addition, data was collected through a structured survey with closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions could have yielded more information on how the various variables of interest influence optimism, and produce a richer definition of the concept of optimism itself. The study could also be improved through longitudinal methods to assess whether the degree of optimism changes at different time points along the college trajectory, and whether optimistic students are indeed more likely to persist to degree attainment.

Conclusion

The task for HSIs is to implement policies and practices that nurture a healthy sense of confidence, and foster first-generation students' perceptions that success is within their control. When students are confident, they act decisively to achieve the outcomes they envision for themselves and find ways to overcome the inevitable obstacles that arise. These attitudes in

turn sustain students' motivation to strive to complete their educational goals, and to foster positive expectations that their efforts to attain a degree will pay off. Initiatives and programs that have the potential to amplify the positive influence of faculty, campus support services staff, and parents merit exploration as HSIs pursue their best practices.

Notes

This study was funded by The Healthy Culture Research and Education Foundation.

<https://healthyculture.com/>

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Laura F. Romo, Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, California, 93106-9490. Email: lromo@ucsb.edu

References

- Ballysingh, T. A. (2019). Aspirational and high-achieving Latino college men who strive “Por mi madre”: Toward a proposed model of maternal cultural wealth. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192719870925>
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191>
- Cavazos Jr, J., Johnson, M. B., Fielding, C., Cavazos, A. G., Castro, V., & Vela, L. (2010). A qualitative study of resilient Latina/o college students. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 9(3), 172-188. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431003761166>
- Chemers, M. M., Hu, L. T., & Garcia, B. F. (2001). Academic self-efficacy and first year college student performance and adjustment. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93(1), 55-64. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.93.1.55>
- Covarrubias, R., Valle, I., Laiduc, G., & Azmitia, M. (2019). “You never become fully independent”: Family roles and independence in first-generation college students. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 34(4), 381–410. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558418788402>
- Crisp, G., & Nora, A. (2010). Hispanic student success: Factors influencing the persistence and transfer decisions of Latino community college students enrolled in developmental education. *Research in Higher Education*, 51, 175–194. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s1162-009-9151-x>
- Espinoza, R. (2010). The good daughter dilemma: Latinas managing family and school demands. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 9(4), 317-330. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192710380919>
- Espinoza-Parra, O., & Collins, C. S. (2018). Individual and institutional factors that contribute to student learning among Latina and Latino undergraduate students. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2018.1518140>
- Fisher, M. J. (2007). Settling into campus life: Differences by race/ethnicity in college involvement and outcomes. *Journal of Higher Education*, 78, 125–161. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2007.0009>
- Friedman, B. A., & Mandel, R. G. (2009). The prediction of college student academic performance and retention: Application of expectancy and goal setting theories. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 11(2), 227-246. <https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.11.2.d>
- Guiffrida, D. A., Lynch, M. F., Wall, A. F., & Abel, D. S. (2013). Do reasons for attending college affect academic outcomes?: A test of a motivational model from a self-determination theory perspective. *Journal of College Student Development*, 54(2), 121-139.
- Gutierrez-Serrano, G., Romo, L. F., & Chagolla, D. (2020). First-generation Latina college students’ motivation to persist: An Attribution Theory and Self-determination Theory perspective. Manuscript under review.
- Habley, W. R., & McClanahan, R. (2004). What Works in Student Retention? Four-Year Public Colleges. ACT, Inc. Retrieved at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED515398.pdf> <https://doi.org/10.1037/e420552008-001>
- Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education*, 324-345. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2673270>
- Longerbeam, S. D., Sedlacek, W. E., & Alatorre, H. M. (2004). In their own voices: Latino student retention. *NASPA journal*, 41(3), 538-550.

- Lopatto, D. (2010). Undergraduate research as a high-impact student experience. *Peer Review*, 12(2), 27-30.
- Maietta, H. (2016). Unfamiliar Territory: Meeting the career development needs of first-generation college student. *NACE Journal*, 77(2), 19-25.
- Melendez, M. C., & Melendez, N. B. (2010). The influence of parental attachment on the college adjustment of White, Black, and Latina/Hispanic women: A cross-cultural investigation. *Journal of College Student Development*, 51(4), 419-435. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0144>
- Menchaca, V. D., Mills, S. J., & Leo, F. (2016). Latina Titans: A Journey of Inspiration. *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research*, 6(2), 96-115.
- O'Neal, C. R., Espino, M. M., Goldthrite, A., Morin, M. F., Weston, L., Hernandez, P., & Fuhrmann, A. (2016). Grit under duress: Stress, strengths, and academic success among non-citizen and citizen Latina/o first-generation college students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 38(4), 446-466. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986316660775>
- Otero, R., Rivas, O., Rivera, R. (2007). Predicting persistence of Hispanic students in their first year of college. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 6, 163–173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192706298993>
- Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W. (2001). Optimism, pessimism, and psychological well-being. In E. C. Chang (Ed.), *Optimism & pessimism: Implications for theory, research, and practice* (pp. 189–216). American Psychological Association.
- Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Huie, F., Wakhungu, P.K., Yuan, X., Nathan, A. & Bhimdiwali, A. (2017, December). Completing College: A National View of Student Completion Rates – Fall 2011 Cohort (Signature Report No. 14). Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.
- Shepherd, M. M., & Sheu, T. S. (2014). The effects of informal faculty-student interaction and use of information technology on non-traditional students' persistence intentions and educational outcomes. *Journal of Higher Education Theory & Practice*, 14(2).
- Snyder, T.D., de Brey, C., and Dillow, S.A. (2019). *Digest of Education Statistics 2017* (NCES 2018-070). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018070.pdf>
- Solberg Nes, L., Evans, D. R., & Segerstrom, S. C. (2009). Optimism and college retention: Mediation by motivation, performance, and adjustment. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 39(8), 1887-1912. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2009.00508.x>
- Stephens, N. M., Hamedani, M. G., & Destin, M. (2014). Closing the social-class achievement gap: A difference-education intervention improves first-generation students' academic performance and all students' college transition. *Psychological Science*, 25(4), 943-953. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613518349>
- Stephens, N. M., Brannon, T. N., Markus, H. R., & Nelson, J. E. (2015). Feeling at home in college: Fortifying school-relevant selves to reduce social class disparities in higher education. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 9(1), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12008>
- Tinto, V. (2017). Through the eyes of students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 19(3), 254-269. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025115621917>

- Torres, V., Reiser, A., LePeau, L., Davis, L., & Ruder, J. (2006). A model of first-generation Latino/a college students' approach to seeking academic information. *NACADA Journal*, 26(2), 65-70. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-26.2.65>
- Vuong, M., Brown-Welty, S., & Tracz, S. (2010). The effects of self-efficacy on academic success of first-generation college sophomore students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 51(1), 50-64. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0109>
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006>