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Hispanic Studies: Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation Rates in Texas Post-Secondary Education

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Hispanic Studies: Enrollment, Retention, and
Graduation Rates in Texas Post-Secondary Education

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ABSTRACT

Hispanics are trapped in a vicious cycle that entails many social injustices, mysticism regarding higher education, and a lack of educational opportunity. This research will discuss what the current education situation is in the State of Texas and what resolutions could be presented to help this phenomenon. Using IPEDS to create a quantitative data set, this research will be formulated to better understand how Hispanics could be prepared to succeed in universities as well as resolutions to help raise the graduation rates, which in return will hopefully help bring awareness to and help the Hispanic population and every constituent affected.

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Introduction

The future of America is built on the minds of our youth today. The cultural and ethnic landscape for the state of Texas has been steadily changing in the past few decades. However, in 30 years the majority ethnicity in the state will change as well. Latinos have longed called Texas home but have unfortunately through various historical events have been deprived of opportunities that should have been given to them. Due to these events, many Latinos have viewed a collegiate education as a luxury that is not needed nor expected from their community. Instead, the norm for the Latino community has been to immediately find work when one turns the legal age and provide for their family. Only a few outliers, in the eyes of the community, have gone to university and have succeeded in earning a diploma. Before going further, there are a few words and key terms that are important to understand. In this research paper, the term Hispanic means relating to or being a person who speaks Spanish or is a decedent of a Spanish speaking country. Latino, often interchanged with Hispanic, is a person from Mexico and Latin America. Post- Secondary Education is defined as any educational institution that provides classes to students who have already completed high school. Postsecondary schools could be trade schools, traditional colleges or graduate schools. The act of enrollment would be a student registering into a post-secondary institution. Retention would be classified as a post-secondary institution keeping students from transferring out, and graduation means the act of completing an institutions program and receiving a diploma.

Hispanics are trapped in a vicious cycle that entails many social injustices, a government that is not helping quick enough nor well enough, and a lack of opportunity.

This research will analyze the current education situation in the State of Texas, the factors that present as roots, and what could be done to resolve this phenomenon. Using IPEDS to create a quantitative data set, the research will be formulated to understand how Hispanics could better prepare to succeed in universities and help raise their graduation rates, which in return will hopefully help bring awareness to and help the Hispanic population and every constituent affected.

Literature Review

Hispanics are the fastest growing population group reaching a total of 52 million, or 16.7 percent of the total U.S. population becoming the second largest racial group. The U.S. is known for their sophisticated economic market, developed internal infrastructure, and the role in global politics. The U.S. understands that with an educated populous they will remain a world power. However, Dr. Liu states that the combination of the rise in the Hispanic population and because of the significant lack of post-secondary education, there is a real possibility of the workforce regressing and decreasing in quality. This reality can hinder economic growth and international relations in the future for the country. Hispanics only had 76.8 percent of students finishing high school, and from that percentage, only 38.7 percent of those students went on and continued a postsecondary education (Liu). Secondary education (a.k.a. high school) rates for Hispanics have increased steadily since 2000, but as far as post-secondary education, they are still behind.

For many Hispanics in the world of academia, the road to obtain an education endured many hardships whether that be financial, cultural, or even societal. Many of

these Hispanic educators such as Dr. Arciniega are working to make an equitable field for Latinos to obtain a higher education in the US. These educators are stating that the American Dream is an idea that a majority of the Latino population holds dear and that the hope for financial success and social mobility is the reason why these people risk their lives to come to the US. However, primary and secondary educators in the U.S. have not been able to tap the determination, hard work, and aspirations from Hispanics in being able to achieve a postsecondary education (Arciniega 152). Through statistical data from the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), educators understand that in a few decades 1 in 4 people will be Hispanic and that this population will be undereducated. Dr. Arciniega and many of his colleagues are blunt about what should be focused on to increase Latino postsecondary education. That list includes getting Latinos into college, ensuring there is an appropriate Latino student to Latino professor ratio, and that Hispanic serving institutes increase to ensure retention of Latino students. From previous research, Latinos that attend Hispanic Serving Institutes (HSIs) are more likely to graduate than at any other university.

In a research project directed by Dr. Easley in 2012, the goal was to discuss and evaluate the disparity of educational achievement in the Latino demographic compared to non-Latinos. Laying the background of the issue, 26 percent of the Latino population is impoverished, and only 8 percent ever obtain a graduate degree (bachelors or higher). The solution to ending poverty and social inequality in the U.S. for Hispanics and First-Generation Students (FGS) has been consistent: obtain a college education. Most Latinos attend Title I schools because of their Social Economic Status (SES), making many of these students ill-prepared and filled with mysticism when dealing with postsecondary

education (Easley 171). The methodology conducted was a qualitative study with a transcendental phenomenal approach. There were three types of data collected: (1) Hispanic students already enrolled in college and why they chose to attend; (2) focus groups of students dealing with Mexican heritage; (3) and focus groups consisting of parents and siblings. The results were that Ganas, an effort to succeed for family heritage, was the primary drive for these students. Easley proposes that if we can tap into this desire, change would occur in this academic sphere. What a majority of non-Hispanic educators need to acknowledge is that the Hispanic student already has a desire of wanting to make a better life for their parent, because the parent sacrificed everything to make a better life for their children.

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) is an organization that has a national agenda of helping Hispanics receive a college education. HACU has the job of distinguishing college campuses as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), a title that universities receive when they have a minimum of 25 percent of students enrolled identifying as Hispanic. Once an institution has received this title, they receive additional programs and federal grants to help the Hispanic population thrive at that HSI school. The roots for this program began in the 1980s at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio and was presented before legislation and was initially shelved. This shelved legislation was later rescued in the early '90s by renewed interest, finally passing through Congress to be recognized nationally. However, the program was not funded by the government until after 1995. During the Clinton Administration, a bill was passed to finally allow federal financial support to be allocated to HACU to help improve the national program (Galdeano 160). Latinos, in general, are enrolled in a small number

of institutions compared to other racial populations, with an increasing number of Hispanics attending HSIs. With more than 54 percent of Hispanic college students in the U.S. enrolled at HSIs, funding for these HACU institutions are much needed and are often time ignored. Galdeano states that in general any Hispanic serving program, whether that be HACU, should work together to help enroll more Hispanics into college and get them through schooling as well. HACU is going in the right direction, but they need more funding and should ideally be at every institution to target every prospective Latino student. The fact that Congress and the Department of Education are not making this a pressing issue has caused distress within many educators who teach at a HACU or who wish to retain and enroll more Hispanics.

The number of women attending university and receiving an education has surpassed that of men for every race. Latinos are no exception to this factor as high school dropout rates for men are 19.9 percent while women are 16.7 percent (Prosero 110). Within the Hispanic community, there have been many different social expectations placed on the Latinos and Latinas. Statistically, the FGS who go to school tends to be Hispanic women who are older, are low income, and work full-time. The most significant predictors of students having access to go to college and obtain a degree depend upon the education level of that Latino's parent (Prosero 103). Much of the motivation of whether an FGS goes or remains in college rests the family education values and support. The main concentration on the parent's influence is the reason behind what motivates Hispanics to attend university. Age has a big factor as well in whether one can complete their degree because of the intrinsic value. Latino men are more likely to drop out of high school or college and enter the workforce to support their immediate family thus making

social, cultural, and economic situations affect the Latino educational experience (Clark 459). The Latino patriarchal and cultural norms impose unique demands as well as *familismo* which is the importance of the Hispanic family unit. In a 2013 study conducted by Dr. Clark, the discussion about the Hispanic family unit and how elements such as familismo and machismo affect the way Latino men think in terms of academic pathways. College readiness should not be an individual task; this process should include the whole family so that everyone in the family unit is educated not just the one lone student. As Dr. Clark stated until educators recognize these barriers for Latino men and how the Latino family unit operates the high school dropout rate and disinterest for college among Latino men will continue to grow.

There has been an increase in research conducted in the academic world about Latinos and post-secondary education, especially about the rising number of enrolling students. Contrary to this popular belief, the buzz of overall college attendance rates has overlooked the rate at which Hispanics are receiving a four-year degree. Latinos have higher rates of students wanting to achieve a post-secondary education, but they also have the lowest rates of post-secondary degree attainment (Martinez 397). The achievement of Associate Degrees is much higher than other racial groups, but because the transition from a junior college to a four-year university can be difficult, this becomes the reason why bachelor's degree achievement falls (Martinez 400). The research presented has indicated that the more thorough a student is in finding a four-year college to attend, the more likely they are to graduate from that institution with a bachelor's degree.

To further extend on Martinez's research, in a recent study in 2016 there was 16.5 percent of U.S. Hispanics enrolled to achieve a post-secondary education. While this

boasts good news, most of this 16.5 percent Hispanic students were enrolled in a two-year community college program versus a four-year university program (Ryan 18). Dr. Ryan, in charge of the 2016 study, states that educators must forge ahead and begin to try to understand the obstacles that hinder Hispanics in pursuit of a four-year education. Another factor in this issue is how parental assets including education and income may not offer the same benefits for Hispanics when choosing what school to attend as other minority groups. Ryan's study takes on a quantitative approach focusing on the unique experiences of Hispanic adolescents who wish to obtain a college education. Being able to unlock the ambition of Hispanic students as well as to teach them to be goal-oriented are resolutions for which Dr. Ryan advocates.

As stated earlier, the number of Hispanic students wishing to attend University has risen throughout the last decade. The issue has been getting these students into a college due to a lack of available information (i.e., college readiness seminars, FAFSA workshops) from the students' secondary schools. In a 2013 study, the primary source of data collection was a detailed, semi-structured interview session with eight college-bound Latino high school senior participants. From this group, eight students, seven girls, and one boy, agreed to participate which were all involved in some advanced program and maintained a GPA higher than a 2.5. At the end of this research, the students were able to find a college to attend after they graduated. However, the participants expressed that the process differed for each student as well as how well suited the University was for the student's personal and academic needs (Carolan-Silva 344). There were multiple challenges expressed when looking for a college leading to the idea that depending on

where that student lived and other factors such as SES, students from the wealthier school district were more likely to find a four-year university.

Gonzalez and Ballysingh in 2012, researched why the gap between Whites and Latinos in college degree attainment has increased rather than decreased in the past three decades. The two solutions they presented to reverse this trend was to work harder or to work differently in order to solve this problem. They both identify the fact that the roots of this education gap are far too complex to discuss and that shrinking federal and state funding towards higher education has played solidly in this affair (Gonzalez, K. P. 284). The study discusses the college-readiness programs that the government has in place to increase college attendance among Latinos. There are a lot of common mistakes such as insufficient funding, a small number of participants, and lack of research to improve these programs that show that these programs need reform and better funding. The universities themselves as well need to ask questions on where there are failing internally to help Hispanic students succeed.

When educators discuss where Hispanics should be in comparison to other successful minority groups, the group has consistently been the Asian population. The Asian minority group, filled with both multi-generational and immigrant families, have shown a low poverty rate as well as a high post-secondary education rate. When comparing Asians to Hispanics, with both minority groups having multi-generational and immigrant families, the Hispanic population has quite the opposite in wealth and education rates (Gasman 131). If these two minority groups share similar backgrounds, why then does the Hispanic population continue to struggle when dealing with education and what can be done to help? In enrolling other diverse students into HSI's, these

institutions become successful in terms of the Hispanic students being able to learn from other students.

Dr. Rodriguez of Pepperdine University discusses that several factors inhibit Latino students in attending University. Dr. Rodriguez explains that a college education is a component to achieve financial success in the U.S. as well as a stable government voice, but even though Latinos are known for their hard work and determination applying to go to a college has presented a significant external barrier. This external barrier has consisted of Government policies that encourage short-term job placement rather than careers, socio-economic statuses of many Latino households, lack of understanding for a college degree, and low expectations from Latino students (Rodriguez 210). Since the Latino population has grown immensely with a low college education rate, there has been this cycle for Latinos to be stuck in poverty, obtain poor jobs, and become shrouded in social issues. Dr. Rodriguez along with his colleagues proposes that the solution to solve this widening gap is to have an intervention which he models after The Department of Education's TRIO Upward Bound program. In conclusion, Hispanics need help in navigating the process of attending university. Hispanics are needing to break this cycle and tap into the skillset of hard work and determination, making achieving a college degree more accessible and easily obtained (Rodriguez 220). Citizens who have a postsecondary degree are more likely to be involved with government to help vote and propose new bills and legislation. With a post-secondary education, the voices of these Hispanic graduates will be able to help build a better presence in government to help future generations of Latinos.

There has been research conducted in 2012 by Turcios-Cotto and Milan that compared three racial groups: Whites, Blacks, and Latinos. The Hispanics tended to have lower graduation rates for secondary and post-secondary education. The authors said that there had been very little cultural data available to help understand the statistics given of why Hispanics do not graduate like the other two races. This educational disparity seems to be the result of structural, individual, and cultural factors such as poverty. Several researchers have found that a psychological factor that influences both Blacks and Hispanics is that they relate being educated as being “too white,” which for many carry a stigma because you have to abandon your identity to become educated (Turcios-Cotto 1401). Programs and institutions of higher learning could be successful if they could relate education with one’s perspective culture and values. The researchers created a survey for students at a large urban diverse school to test for different factors of educational success. In the end, the results for Hispanics showed that educational improvement is not only needed but social reform as well and that Hispanics are facing a plethora of issues that need to be discussed in Congress.

Latino students often encounter indifference, unfriendliness, racism, and microaggressions on campuses causing even less want to stay on campus and graduate. These actions bring up social issues that are not discussed in other studies which include essential access to information regarding colleges and programs that can help situate a Latino student into a college campus. The Latino student has in a certain extent been denied fundamental civil rights and opportunities causing the Latino to live life on the margins of society to even in some instances as second-class citizens (Garcia 137). HSIs are implanted in a university to help with Latino retention and the maintaining of these

student's grades, but Dr. Garcia of New Mexico State University states that HSIs have failed in these areas to serve the Latino student due to the high college dropout rate. Dr. Garcia argues that educators and institutions need to pay special attention to Latino students not only because they are persecuted but cognitively speaking are very intelligent because a majority of Latinos are bilingual. HSIs in Garcia's eyes need to be reformed to protect Latino students and unlock their potential. Racism and microaggression, according to Garcia, are on campuses due to the economic and cultural differences from other races compared to the Latino.

At Wayne State University (WSU), Dr. Gonzales speaks of an idea that was created by the school which was to provide a center for Latino students. Besides WSU, there are a minute amount research centers in the country that provide a comprehensive bilingual/bicultural student service which includes financial support, academic and personal advising, and access to tenured Latino professors (Gonzales, S. M. 230). These Casas have had a statistically significant impact on retention for the Latinos involved at WSU. After creating an action research study and looking at the studies regression models, there was substantial evidence of the positive impact of the center's community model. Not only did the Latino students stay another year, but their grades improved as well. This provides a better way for Universities to be able to attract potential Latino students. The centers also discuss a lot about Latino culture that would not have been known anywhere else on campus, bringing a sense of community which is a huge part of the Latino lifestyle since they are far away from the family unit.

Research Questions

1. What factors are responsible for low enrollment for Hispanics in Post-Secondary institutions?
2. What measures could be taken to improve the current situation of enrollment, retention, and graduation rates for Hispanics in Post-Secondary institutions?

Methods

Once the research questions for this project were solidified, a quantitative study was then commenced to identify any trends among Hispanic enrollment, retention, and graduation rates in the Texas Post-Secondary Education system. Throughout the research, all the data that was used and tested in this study came available from the Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS) provided by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES).

As stated earlier, the schools that were selected for use had to be institutions in the State of Texas as well as have a liberal arts-based education, could be either for-profit or non-profit, and these schools ranged from two-year campuses to universities as described by the Carnegie classification system. The schools that were excluded from the research were technical schools and seminaries. From the 154 institutions selected 36 variables were placed in an Excel Spreadsheet. While analyzing these institutions the 36 variables were: Percent of undergraduate enrollment that are Hispanic/Latino; Hispanic or Latino total; Graduation rate, Hispanic; Percent admitted – total; Percent of total enrollment that

are White; Tuition and fees; Carnegie Classification 2010: Basic; Full-time first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate enrollment; Student-to-faculty ratio; Full-time retention rate; Percent of full-time first-time undergraduates receiving Pell grants; Average amount of Pell grant aid received by full-time first-time undergraduates; Average net price-students receiving grant or scholarship aid; Average net price-students receiving grant or scholarship aid; SAT Critical Reading 25th percentile score; SAT Critical Reading 75th percentile score; SAT Math 25th percentile score; SAT Math 75th percentile score; SAT Writing 25th percentile score; SAT Writing 75th percentile score; ACT Composite 25th percentile score; ACT Composite 75th percentile score; Grand total; Hispanic or Latino total; White total; and Percentage of Hispanic Instructors.

Results

While examining through the dataset, a set was created that included either a three variable set or two variable set to plug into IBM's SPSS program to show if any correlation, as well as any regression model, exists. Of the various sets that were used two final sets were chosen to represent this study. The first set includes the variables of Tuition and Fees, Percentage of Hispanic Students, and Percentage of students on Pell; with the second set including Hispanic Enrollment and Hispanic Faculty.

The following regression model was used to predict graduation rates for Hispanic college students in the state of Texas:

$$\hat{Y}_{\text{Graduation}} = \beta_{\text{Constant}} \times \beta_{\% \text{Pell}} \times \beta_{\% \text{Hispanic}} \times \beta_{\text{Tuition}}$$

Where \hat{Y} Graduation is Hispanic student graduation rates, $\beta\%$ Pell is the percentage of total students receiving Pell Grants, $\beta\%$ Hispanic is the percentage of Hispanic students at the institution, and β Tuition is the average tuition and fees for each institution. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 141) = 35.65, p < .001$, which describes 46% of the variance in the model, $R^2 = 0.458$. The significance of the model appears to be driven primarily by $\beta\%$ Pell which was $.001, p < .001$, as $\beta\%$ Hispanic = 0.031 was not significant in the model, $p = .646$, nor β Tuition = $-0.027, p = .739$. These factors were, however, significantly predictive ($p < .001$) in isolation from the model, which suggests that the significance within the model is limited by collinearity. The percentage of faculty at the institution who were Hispanic did not have a significant predictive value for graduation rates for Hispanic students in isolation from the model and was therefore eliminated from the model.

The following regression model was used to predict the percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in colleges in the state of Texas:

$$\hat{Y}\%HispanicEnrollment = \beta\text{Constant} \times \beta\%HispanicFaculty$$

Where $\hat{Y}\%HispanicEnrollment$ is the percentage of students enrolled at an institution who are Hispanic, and $\beta\%HispanicFaculty$ is the percentage of faculty at the institution who are Hispanic. The model was significant, $F(1,87) = 234.71, p < .001$, which describes 73% of the variance, $R^2 = 0.73$. The coefficient for $\beta\%HispanicFaculty = 1.46, p < .001$.

Discussion

Institutions with higher tuition fees, with a majority of these schools also boasting high graduation and retention rates, will have fewer students who are Hispanic that would qualify to receive a Pell grant throughout their study. Thus, these few students who can attend these prestigious schools, Hispanic students who are financially able to attend due to government grants and academic scholarships, they are statistically prone to graduate. In retrospect, the correlation also insinuates that schools with a large student population receiving Pell grants are statistically not likely to finish their studies. Much of these school are those that qualify by the government as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), due to at least a 25 percent of Hispanic Students, tend to be public universities and community colleges such as the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) or Laredo Community College. From the data and literature review, one can see that Hispanics who come from a low-income background are less likely to attend an expensive university. This decision stems not only because of money but because of the K-12 school they attended, most likely being underfunded and ill-prepared to teach these pupils college readiness. Therefore, the issue of Hispanics not accomplishing a degree no longer seems to hang solely on the issue on money. This is because top-tier schools will most likely hand out additional scholarships to ensure these top performing students enroll and also because a Pell grant with loans from the government could cover the rest of a private education's tuition as well as cover a public education's tuition. The problem relies heavily on how underprepared Hispanic students are in the public education system.

Examining over set two, Universities that have a higher percentage of Hispanic Instructors are more likely to have a higher population of Hispanic Students that enroll. However as stated in the results, a larger Hispanic Instructor to Hispanic Student ratio does not mean that there is a better retention or graduation rate. These institutions are usually classified as HSI's, and when reviewing the current state of post-secondary enrollment, Hispanics are enrolling in college more than in the past. The problem of getting Hispanics to college is not as big of a problem as that of Hispanics completing their degree. Not only are they degreeless but in some cases surrounded in debt by the loans they requested to pay for their tuition.

Social Policy

From the results of the dataset a problem arises, Hispanic students are not completing their college degrees and are staggering behind other ethnic groups. Two resolutions are presented, the first solution is short-term that can span from 5-10 years to implement and the second is long-term ranging from 30-50 years.

The short-term resolution is a regional bridge program that would be sponsored by the local universities and colleges in a school district. This bridge program would be mandated by the Texas Education Agency and funded by the State. The program would be mandatory for all High School Juniors, regardless of race and socioeconomic status, and would help teach basic knowledge about college, financial literacy, study habits, as well as how to apply to post-secondary institutions. The program could last for either a semester or whole school year and would take up an elective. This bridge program can incentivize universities and colleges not only by promoting the school and building

relationships with the students, but by the Texas government potentially providing grants or tax breaks for these participating institutions and instructors. This policy would instill a strong presence of a local university to the communities benefited. Part of the problem Hispanics have when dealing with enrollment and graduation rates, especially with first-generation students, is the mysticism of American Universities. Helping these families and students understand how universities work will provide a sense of clarity as well as possibly help the cultural negativity some Hispanics hold with post-secondary education. When recruiting Hispanic families, an institution needs to be mindful and recruit the whole family, not just the one student.

The long-term solution would be to reform the Texas Education System and later the US Education System, to ensure an equitable opportunity for low-income and underrepresented students. This resolution would promote local educational goals, providing more government funding towards Title I Schools, as well as ending High school being the end of the educational career track but perhaps college or a technical school. In general, Hispanic representation has been lacking in Washington, D.C., more over in terms of educational goals. Since the state of Texas does not follow the U.S.'s Common Core educational track, Texas can reshape the education department in a way that best suits the students that they serve. This road towards reformation will be extensive and elaborate, but with the guide and examples from other highly ranked educational nations, the Texas Educational System can be a shining symbol for other states in the country.

Constraints and Further Research

There were a few factors that played as constraints towards this research project. The short time after the required class for this project and graduation played a considerable part in the project's limitations. There was as well some missing information from IPEDS that schools chose to withhold, therefore not allowing a complete data sets for each school. This research was only for Hispanics in the state of Texas, if given more time schools from every state could have been represented and a better national picture could have been commissioned.

For further research, a longitudinal study of 100 Hispanic students from Title I Schools from the State of Texas would be conducted. This study would last from Freshman year in High School to Freshman year in College for the students' academic career, and during this time gather mixed methodology data form their experiences and from grades. This study could be made longer by including 100 Hispanic students from every U.S. state. Another different research project would be to hold a qualitative study of interviewing college admission officers. The type of questions that would be presented would be about the students the institutions reject and what they could have done to have been accepted, moreover the Hispanic students they reject. And finally, to create a research project over the proposed Short-Term Social Policy Resolution. A few school districts would be used for a mixed methodology project to see the overall success of the program. If the program deems successful, then the program can be integrated into the state of Texas and later the whole country.

Conclusion

The Latino Community has so many cultural facets, and historical components that lead into complex psychological and sociological webs, that merely trying to present every fact and theory would span weeks and thousands of pages. Though this research looked only at enrollment, retention, and graduation rates from a quantitative viewpoint-- allowing such factors such as culture and social norms brings such different aspect to this project. The Hispanic Community has so much to offer to America with their values of hard work, diligence, and family unity that if this educational gap were not an issue the future of the country would be in a far better situation. However, the Hispanic community has been placed on the sidelines of America's focus which has unintentionally instilled feelings of contempt and hindrance in the Hispanic community's mind. Not only is this detrimental to the unity of the American people, but this issue has been ignored too long that there are deep issues that will be both hard and take serious action to mend. Through intentional relationships, educational guides, and motivation the Hispanic population can progress and close the educational gap not only helping the future of America but also empowering young minds.

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